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CHRIST AT THE DOOR OF THE HEART

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

MORGAN DIX

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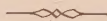
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SERMONS, DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL.

SERMON I.

CHRIST AT THE DOOR OF THE HEART.

REVELATION III. 20.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

OUR Blessed Lord, during His ministry here on earth, constantly made use of parables, and taught the people in figures of speech. Those parables and figurative sayings are as fresh to-day as ever. It is good to hear them, and to be instructed in that way. For we are but children to Him; men must become as little children before they can be saved; and when we hear His voice addressing us in that attractive method of story and illustration, it is as if the head of a family were talking to the little ones, and, with loving condescension, fitting his speech to their minds.

The words of the text are from the lips of that Good Master who had the words of eternal life. They were addressed to us, through St. John the Evangelist, when an exile in Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimo-

ny of the Saviour. He saw our Lord, in visions, and, in the Spirit, heard many marvellous things; and still the Lord talked with him in figures, as in the past days. He, who had described Himself as the Vine, in whom, like branches, His people have life; as the Shepherd, guiding the flock, and standing between it and the prowling wolf of the desert; as the Rock of Faith; the Master of the house absent on a journey; the Father and the King, still pursues that old way of instruction. "Behold," saith He, "I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Let us ask His help, while we meditate on these words, for they contain wondrous things in parable and mystery.

And, first, of this door, at which the Saviour knocks. It is the heart of man. To that does Christ, in His unspeakable love and compassion, make the first and the last appeal. In the Gospel there is more than enough to give full exercise to the most powerful intellect, and enforce its entire respect: yet the final aim is at the heart. What the heart is, that the man is; wherever the heart leadeth, the rest of the being will follow; he who wins the heart, has the whole man. To the heart the Saviour lays claim, in the case of every one that cometh into the world. He does so, because every one has a heart to give Him, and because in the case of that gift there can be no distinctions. Otherwise, there are great differences among us; here there is none. Some have high intellectual powers to give

to their Lord ; some have riches, and others beauty and strength, or rank and station, or the means of influencing the age : and of these may they offer costly oblation like the Royal Sages who knelt before the Infant Redeemer, and presented Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Yet are they few who can offer on that wise to Christ, in return for what He gave up for them. But there is one possession which all hold alike, high and low, rich and poor, young men and maidens, old men and children ; all have it, and all are free to give it to their Lord ; and when it comes to that, no one gift is more precious than another. " My child, give me thy heart !" So, with us all, He pleads. Nor can any say, "I have no heart to give thee." You may say to Him, "Thou shalt not have my heart ; I have given it away, I have flung it away." Yet even so, the conscience will lament and cry, "Time was, when it might have been otherwise ; thy heart is thine no more ; it is gone ; it is held by the Evil One ; it is frozen up in the winter of indifference to God ; it has been torn out of its place by passions and trampled by the scornful, and befouled in the mire." But this was not always so with thee : there was a day when that heart might have been given to Christ."

Thus, then, it is the heart which the Lord requires ; to the heart is He represented as coming in the words before us. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." The door is the sinner's heart. That door is shut. It is closed against Christ. He stands, and knocks. Had the

door been open, this could not have been. He takes that patient position, because the heart, which is the door, is closed.

3 Where shall we begin, in trying to comprehend this amazing scene? First, observe, that it is the Lord who comes to us men, not we to Him. While yet we give no thought to Him, he is drawing nigh and coming to our doors. His love for us is not the response to our anxious search and dutiful affection ; it precedes even the feeblest inclination, the faintest motion toward Him. "We love Him" now, "because He first loved us." That is the argument by which He seeks to draw the world to Himself. It is not the lost sheep that goes in search of the Shepherd ; but the Good Shepherd, who leaveth the ninety and nine upon the mountains of security and comes hither seeking the one which went astray. Christ comes to us before we think of going to Him. He comes to every one born into the world. There is not one whom He neglects or forgets. He comes, and, though rejected, He will not straightway depart ; He will return, while yet there is hope, even unto the end.

† Behold the Saviour, standing at the door ; ask if ever there was patience like unto His. He not only comes to that door ; He stands there waiting ; nor doth He only stand and wait, but meekly standing thus and waiting, He knocks. So deeply does He long for entrance, that it is hard to make Him go. To each one of us, in our times, has He come in that way, to some early, to others

late. Canst thou not recall an hour, in which thy Saviour came to thee, and asked for entrance into thy thoughts and thy life? Many are called while yet children. The mind and heart of children are readier for the Lord than those of hardened men and women. Responsibilities are also great, at that tender age: let them remember it who have to train and form the minds of the young. A little child may turn the Lord away. The sins of after life, the downfall of later years, may sometimes be traced to neglect of a grace given in childhood, to despising and forsaking the guides who were then at hand. Christ knocks at the hearts of children; if they do not open unto Him at that time, they may not do so till after many years; they may never do so, not even in the hour of death. What then of those false friends, those deadly though unconscious enemies of children, who have never bidden them expect their Saviour's approach, nor prepared in their docile and impressionable hearts the way for His coming and a loving tenderness to meet Him with outstretched arms and to hold Him as their own?

But let us proceed. "I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in." Were ever words like these? "If any man hear my voice!" Can this be imagined, that any should not hear? or worse, that any would not hear? "The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation," saith the psalmist: "the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice." And again it is written, that at the last, "all that are

in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." But there is one thing which that voice, however mighty, cannot effect. It cannot open the door of the heart, till the keeper of that door consent.

"If any man will hear my voice and open, I will come in." If, here, limits the power even of Christ: it makes the issue doubtful. That voice may call; it may plead; it may plead earnestly and long; and there may be no answer. Something within the heart may deaden the sound or shut it out. The dweller in the mortal house may be too busy to go and open the door; he may be eating and drinking and making merry with his friends, not choosing to be interrupted; he may fear to open, lest he should admit One to rule over him and set his house in order, and break up that over anxious, that disordered life. There is a doubt whether that door will ever open. How dreadful is the state of such a soul! There is but one more dreadful, when the doubt becomes certainty; when the Lord departs; when the light of hope, a feeble ray, dies out forever, when all is dark about the doors of the spiritual house, and darkness is within.

So is it with men in the world. Thousands of hearts are closed against Christ. It may be for want of knowledge; or for the lack of good influences around them; or for the love of sin, or mistrust of the power of God's grace, or through carelessness, dulness of apprehension, contempt of religion: be the cause what it may, thousands

of hearts are hardened against Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. Some, who loved Him once, are gone back and walk with Him no more; they fear not His name, they feel no need of help from Him; to them He is as one of whom they never heard. In such a case, we have before us the very picture presented in the text. Draw near, and look upon the scene.

It is a lonely place, somewhere in the wilderness of this world, where no friendly foot passes by, and where no voice of life or hope is ever heard. And here is the door; as it were a door in a low wall; a door which once was open, but has now for many a year been closed. It is shut, and all around is still. The door is the heart of some sinful man, who has forgotten his Father and his God. How came it shut, shut tight, and overgrown as thus with weeds and clambering nettles? Ask, of the years that are fled, each carrying its record to be written in the Book of God; ask of the first wilful sin, the first fall, the growing coldness, the indifference, the guilt, the shame, the sorrow of these latter days. Marvel not, with this history before you, that the door is shut. The longer the heart is closed against its God, the harder to open it. The processes of nature have their due effect; the elements do their work in silence and surely; a work which every day makes more effectual. The bars, long stationary, rust in the staples; some time since, a child might have slipped them out and laid them aside; now, the strength of a man would essay the task in vain. The

rains and snows of many a season have beaten into the lock and choked it up. In former days, a path led to this door; a path by which the good angels could reach it, and all honest Christian friends; a pathway, pleasant to the eye, fresh with flowers, clean of rubbish, and easy to be found. Alas! how great the change! The pathway now is rough with stones, or seems to be, for so rankly is it overgrown with weeds, that its outline is all but lost. Breast-high on either hand are come up the briar and the thorn; the wall crumbles; it is gray with mould; an aspect of desolation weighs down the spirit as we gaze. Who would walk on yonder pathway? Who would try to approach that door? Yet there is One, who cometh up this way. He looks toward that closed and rusted door; He turns His holy feet to that forsaken path. It is the same who trod, with those very blessed feet, the hills of Palestine, the wilderness of Jordan, who, with those feet bleeding and travel-sore, did follow His lost and erring children, scattered abroad in this evil world. Lo! He comes; up the pathway, which has almost forgotten the sound of a footstep; lighting with the lantern of His word the mournful twilight and the shadows of the place. His face is grave, and sad, earnest, and full of love. He hath on Him the vesture of the High Priest who maketh intercession for sin. He is coming up the path. He has reached the gate. Behold, He standeth at the door. Without, around, all is silence. He knocks. He calls to whoever

is within : He says, "My child, I am here ; your Saviour waiteth at the door of your house. The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

Q soul thus called by Jesus Christ, what answer wilt thou make ? Perhaps there shall be no reply. The knock resounds within ; the voice is heard outside ; but within there is silence : neither knock nor voice can reach the ear of the spiritually dead. The silence is that which closes, self-absorbing, around a corpse in its shroud : it is like that darkness in Egypt, a darkness which could be felt. The door may shake in its rusty hinges ; the bars may creak in the staples ; but none comes to open. No wonder. There is nothing inside, save that worse than nothing, a dead soul ; dead in sin, and buried in forgetfulness. O soul, to whom this one last opportunity remains, the Bridegroom is come, the cry is made, but it is midnight with thee ! Christ calleth, in mercy and in pity ; and yet again He calls ; and calls once more. But there is neither voice, nor any one that answereth, nor any to reply. At last the end is come. He turns away ; He leaves the door ; He passes forth ; He is gone. Stillness once more is around the place, and that door is the door of a grave. The wind of Death shall mourn there with everlasting dirge ; the grasses shall grow rank ; the weeds shall climb and overtop the wall ; the pathway shall disappear : no footstep of Grace or Hope may be heard there again.

Yet, till that awful moment come, if come it must, let

us hope and pray; pray for those who pray not for themselves, and hope so long as we dare to hope. For it is not always so; God forbid that Christ should always come, and stand, and knock, and wait, as has been described, in vain. There are cases, in which the first sound of His approach is distinctly heard; in which man listens, with wonder, and perhaps with a joy not known for many a weary day; there be hearts long estranged which would receive Him now, did they but know the way. What if there be not strength to answer His call and open? For He saith, "If any man will open the door, I will come in." What if the power to open be lost? Still there remaineth one thing which can be done. Thou mayest not have the strength to move those hard and rusted bars which separate between thee and thy Lord; but thou hast this much strength, at least, to crawl to the gate, to place thy poor hand upon it, to try to move it, and to call to Him, that thou art there, oppressed and heavy of heart, weary of sin and weary of thyself, longing to see His face, to ask forgiveness, to bend the head for absolution. This, at least, may be done; do thou this, cost what it will; for even though, in that great effort, thy soul should faint on the threshold, it shall suffice to have so called unto Him out of the deep of thy distress, to have uttered in sincerity thy confession, thy prayer, wrung from a penitent and contrite heart. For all the rest, trust thy Lord. At once, with His all
7 powerful hand, will He strike down that door; He will

open the way for His scarred feet; He will pass over the wreck, and enter, in perfect beauty and holiness, into that scene of ruin. He will stoop down, and gently raise the fallen, and comfort the soul which trusteth in Him. Come unto Him all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and He shall give you rest. He will repair the mischief which the Evil One hath wrought. He will set wide open the door of the heart, that angels may pass in and out and commune with the soul that was dead and is alive again, that was lost and is found. He will cause the spiritual house to be swept and garnished; anew shall it be consecrated to Himself; "and I will come in to him," saith Christ, "and will sup with him, and he with me." He will take the bread and break, and likewise the cup, saying, "Take, eat; This is My body; drink thou of this cup, which is My Blood; and lo! whoso eateth the flesh and drinketh the Blood of the Son of Man hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." This is the supper of the Lord; no carnal feast, like those of the world; but a spiritual and divine Communion, wherein are the sign of forgiveness, the gift of grace, the proof of power. Open unto Him, who knocks at thy gate, and He shall come in, and shall give thee that Bread of everlasting life, and great shall be the peace and joy of His children.

See to it, brethren, that ye leave not Christ to knock at your door unheard. With some of us, it may be so; and once, and twice, may the sound have been heard

already ; the third may be the last. Listen for His footsteps, hearken to His voice ; fainter perhaps now, than they were some years ago ; but still it is not too late. And if there be among you any whom that voice may be thought to address most tenderly, most lovingly, it is the young ; the young in years, the young in sin, who have life before them, who have it in their power to give their Lord the best thing that can be offered, the devotion of a fresh and single heart. To such, let the preacher's final words be spoken ; to young men and maidens, to the very children, just beginning to know what the Lord has done for them, what they are to do for Him. Watch ye, and guard your hearts with jealous care. It is not long, since, in Holy Baptism, ye were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven ; not long since the bright dews of the first great sacrament glistened on your brows, and the sign of the beloved Cross was set upon you. Then was the door opened wide ; it is open still. The Spirit is with you, ye have not grieved Him away. The Lord talks with you as a father with a child. What would some of us give, were we as near to heaven now as we were at your age, ere yet we came into temptation and saw the horrible corruption that is in the world ! Watch ye, and pray, and let all who love you pray, that the time may never come, when you should fall from grace and depart from God. Let not the gate be shut : let not the pathway of the Lord toward your soul be choked with weeds.

· To keep what we have is easier than to recover what
· we have lost. To have the Lord ever with you is life.
To forsake, to forget Him, is dark ingratitude and im-
pending death. Would you have Him near you here-
after ; in trouble and trial, in the latter years ? Keep
near Him now ; dwell with Him, and let Him dwell with
· you. And may this thought be yours at the last, that
He never found in you a shut and silent heart, that your
hearts were always open to Him, that you had for Him
always the welcome of true and faithful affection, that
your soul was ever the home of your Lord and His holy
angels. Such indeed is every faithful heart : " This shall
be my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have a delight
therein."

SERMON II.

THE LIGHT OF EVENING.

ZECHARIAH XIV. 7.

"It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light."

OUR Saviour once said to His disciples, that there are twelve hours in the day ; twelve hours wherein to work, while men see the light of this world. Of these none should be so calm and sweet as the last, in which the evening shadows are falling on one who has spent his allotted time in good and honest toil. Man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening, when the light begins to fade and the weary come home to rest. Some place there usually is, in each one's house, which he is wont to choose for repose after the tasks of the busy, anxious hours ; and there it is pleasant to sit, and watch, with thoughtful eyes, the slow thickening of the dusk, and the twinkling of the lights in street and house, as one by one they are touched into fire. It is the time for stillness, and low, quiet tones, and communion with things and persons far away ; the time to enjoy the gathering dimness and that sense of mystery which it spreads around, as if the retiring of the bold and noisy

day foretold the transit to another and a better life. So deep is the peace, so sweet the refreshment of that hour, to one who, having done his work as a true man, may rest with a good conscience; even in bodily fatigue there is a not unwelcome sensation, when the soul is at peace with God and all the world; and then through the softly glowing skies, and the haze where the first stars are coming forth on the veiled brow of the evening, there may be heard a prophecy of the rest that remaineth to the people of the Lord.

But let us enlarge the range of view. Such as is the evening hour after a day of honest toil, such ought to be the latter years in every good man's life. "At evening time it shall be light." As comes the evening to each mortal day, so comes an evening, at last, to all our days together; and with it the evening light, better far than the growing brilliancy of the early hours, or the set glare of the noonday sun. When the day of life has been a good and useful day, not idly spent, or wasted, but passed in the fear of God, in piety and honesty, and in the performance of duty; then must its ending be calm and still. The evening hour should be to him the sweetest the man has ever known; the shadows should be warm, not chill. On the weary laborer, composing himself at length for his eternal rest, myriad eyes of heaven look down full of affectionate congratulation as on a good and faithful servant for whom is made ready an abundant entrance into the joy of his Lord.

Let us direct our thoughts to that evening hour, and consider in what its light consists.

In the evening of life comes the final and distinct realization of the little value of this world. The false colors have been washed off; the charms of youth and freshness have long since passed away; and a man sees how vain is that thing which once perhaps he admired. And then he has the prospect of the early exchange of this imperfect and unsatisfactory state for another and a better existence. A true man outgrows, step by step, what he was; at last, if he live long enough, he outgrows the world.

I have heard old men talk together, religiously and earnestly, of time and life, of God, of this world and the next, of events that had occurred in their own experience and of scenes and actions in which they had borne part; and their voices sounded as if they came from far away, and as if the speakers knew more than younger men, and were better worth listening to. One who is near to the world to come, and has in his strong heart the perfect conviction of its reality, can speak to you and me as no one else can speak. He knows the actual value of this world; he loves it no longer, he fears it not; the hours have brought him nearer to a larger, fuller life, a purer, better existence, of which the fool doubts sometimes, while the wise man is preparing for it. The prospect throws beautiful light upon his evening hours. For him the time of infirmity and weakness is nearly past; the

years of labor and mourning are just ended ; the better life is ready to begin, a life of emancipation from sin and sorrow, a life which wastes not, nor grows old. “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath given us an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away ”

And, secondly, to pass from this life to that in front, will be to go from ignorance and imperfection unto a wider knowledge and a deeper wisdom. The evening brings the time when the servant of God shall see and know many of the secrets of the universe, and read through and through what had long been dark mysteries to him. How many things are there which we do not understand ! A thousand questions disturb us, and though we turn away from them, it is with an unsatisfied, if not with a restless spirit, wishing that we knew, and scarce consenting to go on as thus in the dark. But at evening time there shall be light. The closing of the eyes in this world, is substantially their opening to things more strange, more wonderful than we dreamed of while in darkness. If the acquisition of knowledge be a master passion of our race ; if men find intense delight in investigating the mysteries of nature and reading her laws ; with what impatience should those await their change, who expect to come out ere long into full view of ways of the Lord which now are veiled and hidden, and to see more nearly the marvels of the universe !

God knows everything, from height to depth, from side to side ; and in the face of God, as in a mirror, shall His servants see what they could not see in the days of their flesh ; spirit shall commune with spirit ; that immortal soul, which is at infinite remove from matter, shall in another and a clearer vision, see what the spirit has longed for years and years to see, but in vain : and while we in this dim, obscure place, are bowing down upon the relics of the departed, and uttering above them our laments, they whose loss we thus bewail may already be exulting in a knowledge, a wisdom, and a spiritual light, one instant's enjoyment of which is worth more than all that this world ever gave to the wisest of its children.

Let us place these first, among the lights which appear as the evening falls on a good man's life : the full conviction that he is about to exchange a lower for a higher existence ; the expectation of new powers enabling him to read, as none here on earth can read, the wonderful books of God ; the prospect of a speedy growth in wisdom and knowledge, with marvellous widening of the field for spiritual and intellectual joys. And then let us proceed to considerations of another class.

It must bring great peace at the last, to look back upon the life and consider its moral and its lesson. That moral, that lesson, are, that God is never absent from His people, and that they live, and move, and have their being in Him. A man must feel this at the last as never before. Whatever has befallen him, wherever he has wandered,

whatever he has accomplished in his brief years; all must look at the last like a very little thing: the memory of the past may fade away, so that it is difficult for him to recall the incidents of departed years. But one thing comes clearer and clearer out; the steady, never-failing Presence and Providence of God. Like a great firmament of golden light, that Presence has been above and about the path. The companionship of the Almighty exalts the child of earth, and gives to the least important history a certain dignity and honor. Now, in the latter day of life, that must come home to a good man, as what he can never dwell on long enough; as something of which he can never tire of thinking; the conviction that his God and his father's God never left him, and never failed him; that his great and merciful God has been invisibly shaping and directing the entire course of his existence, and has led him all the life through. "Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." That shadow is full of light and health; no shadow of earth, but an overshadowing of outstretched wings and arms of defence. And again, what joy to know that we have pardon and absolution for the sins of our youth and later days! Looking back upon our life, we see where we went wrong; we recall grave acts committed in bad, unwholesome hours, and under temptation. For these we deserved punishment; had God blotted us out of His book for some of those transgressions, He would not have been

unjust. But the fact that we have been spared, and still can hope and pray, and are at peace, is the sign of our forgiveness. It is as if a voice had told us that the sins have been put away and that the pardon has not been withheld. A full sense of security for the future grows up out of the study of mercies in the past; the light grows stronger and stronger; the longer we look, the more and the brighter are the little stars which appear twinkling above the path by which we go, and shining on the waters through which men pass forth to the Presence of their God.

But think not only of the man himself; remember also the companions of other years, the persons with whom he has had to do. One by one they disappear; what heart-rending separations, what deep misery in the long, long farewells! That is, perhaps, the bitterest pang, the heaviest cross, that men can bear; the parting with those they loved the best, the looking on helplessly and seeing them go. But when one reaches the hour of evening, that special grief ends, and in its place comes a great joy: the prospect of speedy reunion with the lost. There are those who have waited ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, chiding the slowness of the time, to see once more the faces they loved, to hear the voices again: life was a long-repressed desire, and days were counted till the joyful meeting. Think then what light must break in upon the evening to hearts so faithful and true, and what must be their gladness who imagine themselves once more with those for

whom they have watched and waited, perhaps from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age ! A venerable servant of God once wrote these words : " There was a dear one, absent from whom, I counted not days but hours ; for wherever she was seemed to me my only home and resting-place. Now she is gone, my heart is scattered wherever those are who were near and dear to her. Home, in its dearest sense, I have no longer on earth, nor expect to feel till I join her in that Christian's rest where she awaits me." Simple as are these words, they express what thousands have felt, about reunion with the lost in that place where are no sin and sorrow, no tears and no parting. And as for those who have within their noble natures the capacity for such strong attachments, and can keep a loyal heart, year after year, unshaken by the chances and changes of this mortal life, their joy must be unutterable in the thought that the hour is come, when the veil shall be drawn, and those whom death divided shall meet again in the presence of the Lord. Evening is the time for the meeting of friends : after toil is over, and when the day is done, men hasten home, and are gladdened by the sight of loving faces ; the lights are lit, and bright fires sparkle, welcome guests come in, and pleasant cheer is made. So shall it be in Christ's dear Home, that House of many mansions, where His own shall meet and gather together rejoicing ; and the thought that the time for that blessed reunion is close at

hand, brings gladness, often, to hours which, but for religion, would be hours of darkness.

Nor is it our own according to the flesh, only, that we expect to see ; but those of whom we heard while we lived here ; our masters and teachers, the companions of our better days, our guides to knowledge, wisdom, and holiness. With the coming of the evening, we draw nearer to the sight of the good and great, for whose lives and labor the world was the better and from whose example we drew help. We shall presently see those four who wrote the Life of Jesus Christ, and those who bore the tidings of His Gospel to the ends of the earth ; those of whom the world was not worthy ; those who suffered for the truth's sake, and those who earned the crown and title of saintship in the Father's realm. Beyond the verge of time are the world's benefactors, whom notwithstanding it persecuted, and those who fulfilled the royal law and gave their lives for the brethren ; and many a father and doctor, and many a holy man and woman after whose names our children were called, and of whom we have been hearing all our life through. And all who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and served Him in their day are there ; and many, no doubt, who would have loved Him in the days of their flesh, if they had heard of Him, yet, though they knew Him not, did walk according to the light they had, so that they were found worthy to be led to His Presence after they had left this mortal state. There also are the great archangels, and the in-

numerable company of lesser spirits ; and in Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, is the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven ; and nearer to all these draws the servant of God, as the day of the world passeth away and the shadows of the evening are stretched out. But why do we speak of creatures ? He is there in whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore ; the Lord Jesus Christ, the beginning of our strength, the end in whom we rest. To depart and be with Christ was accounted by Paul better than to live on here. To see the King in His beauty, to look upon the face which as yet, we have beheld only in dreams, lightening the darkness of this life ; to gaze, at length, upon those wounds which are the sign of the redemption of the world ; to come, literally, to that of which we have so often thought and spoken as the wonder of wonders, the holding open, visible communion with the Incarnate Son of God ;—who can be near to all this, without finding some of the brightness and glory of such a state and such conditions already dawning on him ? Who shall wonder that the saints, having these things in their thoughts, desired earnestly that their hour might come ?

And there is one thing more to bring light in the evening of life. Many have feared lest they might, somehow, lose their faith. That is, upon the whole, the darkest of all spectres, to a Christian. He does not

dread the loss of wealth, the loss of friends, the loss of health, the loss of life, as he dreads the possible loss of faith; for his faith is that which carries him triumphant through all other losses; it is the victory which overcometh all foes. How blessed then must it be at the close of an honest, true life, to be able to say with St. Paul, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." To know, that whatever mistakes are made, whatever sins are committed, we were saved from that gravest error, that heaviest and most hopeless sin, the denial of the Catholic Faith. Everything else may be forgiven: can that be pardoned? How could it be pardoned in us? Is it not like to the sin against the Holy Ghost? The objects of faith could not have been made plainer than they are to me, consistently with my freedom of action: if then I do not keep the faith, I should have sinned against the clearest evidence I could have had. What a fearful danger! What deep, calm gladness to feel, at the end, that we were saved from that horrible guilt! How dear must be his creed to the aged believer! It was taught him when a little child; it was his study when a youth; all the life through it has been the law and rule of his thought; with reverent devotion he still repeats it. Of that symbol of supernatural truth, who can estimate the preciousness to him! "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!" What more is needed to make all clear and right at the last? Not to have fallen away; not to have been deceived by the lying voices of the

world; not to have bartered the unsearchable riches of the heavenly wisdom, for the pinchbeck of human opinions; to have held fast the form of sound words, to have confessed the Lord before men, to have kept true loyalty to Christ and the Church;—this is to have gained a victory, in an evil and adulterous generation, which shall bring a man to the portal of eternity, with a peace in his heart that the world cannot give. O may it be ours, so to witness a good confession, when upon us the ends of the world are come!

I have sought to show you in what the light of the evening of life consists, for those who reach it in the love and fear of God. The exchange of a world so imperfect as this, for a higher and better existence; the coming into a larger knowledge and understanding of all mysteries; the long review of the merciful providence and loving kindness of the Lord, the prospect of rejoining friends of other years; the entrance into the great congregation of the faithful, and sharing in their tranquil joy; the approach to the sight and presence of the Lord; the strength inspired by the thought of having held fast the glorious creed of the Church, unshaken by man or devil:—these are among the sources of that gladness which is so often observed and envied in the expectant servants of our God. If this be an ideal, it is one which may be and is realized; set it before you now, while your probation goes on. One thing only, can keep our evening time from being light: to have loved and lived for this present world.

In shadow and deep darkness shall this world disappear; the shadow of death is the outcome of that gloom; the sting of death is sin; the darkness of death arises from the fact that, to the dead world, and its dead concerns, and its dead votaries, there is no resurrection to a better life. Go thy way with the world, love it, walk in its paths, and with it shall thy hopes vanish, and amidst its heaps of ruin shall thine honor, and all thou hast, be buried under the stones of darkness and the shadow of death. But live to thy God, and keep Him full in view on thy journey, and death shall have no dominion over thee, and when in other cases the lamentable night is falling, there shall be pleasant radiance about thee, and at evening time it shall be light.

SERMON III.

GOD'S PURPOSE FULFILLED IN HIS ELECT.

ROMANS VIII. 28.

“ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

IT may be said, of those philosophies which men have invented in hope to dispel the clouds which brood upon this mortal state, that they are broken lights of divine truth. The image of God is not wholly effaced in us; the truth disclosed in the primitive revelation has not been entirely lost. Men, not under grace, have yet some light, and something of divinity within them: so that even in their speculations on solemn themes there are vestiges of the knowledge of the Lord.

It is so with what we style Optimism; the philosophic scheme which lays it down that all tends ultimately to good; that evil is but good in a lower form; that at the last, everywhere, and in every case, the good must and will prevail. This is an instance of a truth of revelation disfigured by crude additions. The views referred to may be held, first, by men in full health, and with no very pressing wants; by those who, being of a peculiarly buoy-

ant disposition, ride lightly over waves which would submerge their less fortunate fellow travellers over life's rough sea; by the happy few who naturally take a joyous view of existence, with no sufficient reason why they should, except their native temperament or their favorable physical conditions. Or, secondly, the theory may be held by men of poetic instinct who have an habitual dread of painful subjects; who, having no root or ground in the Church, do yet "faintly trust a larger hope;" who hope, as it were, against what they see, and comfort themselves by thinking that, somehow or other, "good shall be the final goal of ill," and that, in the long run, all shall be well.

Now this philosophy, whether buoyantly or plaintively expressed, has in it a germ of truth. But how inadequate are its arguments, how feeble compared with parallel disclosures in the word of God! This is but the working of a poor human spirit trying to find comfort without going to the Comforter, trying to get light without resort to the Fountain of the Light Eternal. The full truth has, indeed, its awful side; and so should it be, for Truth excludes error, with rigor and severity, abhorring and hating what God abhors and hates: but the Truth, severe and stern, is also inexpressibly lovely, and opens up depths of wonder which leave the highest human imaginings far behind, out of sight.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according

to his promise." It may be asked,—Is there anywhere in Holy Scripture a statement more reassuring or more elevating in its suggestions? There is no doubt here, no hoping and groping; but assurance. "We KNOW:" and what a nobility in that word, I KNOW! There is a great summing up of "all things" that are, or can be, or have been. There is action in unity: "all things work," and "work together." There is the end; that end which makes the eyes glisten, and the heart beat faster; they "work together for good." And then comes in, what should not have been found here, if this were man's work, discrimination and difference; a distinction between man and man, dividing them into the qualified and the disqualified; and that distinction made, not by arbitrary predestinating act, but by the very inner quality and character of the man himself, and by the presence or the absence of the highest and purest of all passions that can dwell in the human heart. Such is the full truth, which the poor philosopher perverts. It is wonderfully stated. There are two difficulties here. First, it is hard to believe this. But secondly, it is harder not to believe it, if one hath any idea of the meaning of that expression, the love of God.

Let us take up this verse, and think it through.

"All things:" let us begin there. It is a term in constant use in Holy Scripture. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (St. John i. 1). It was the purpose of God "in

the fulness of the times to gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 10). He "hath put all things under His feet" (Eph. i. 22). "God giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii. 25). It is a great, comprehensive term; it often appears, with an article before it, τὰ πάντα; *the All Things*; the universe of things visible, audible, or otherwise known. It takes in men, and events, and forces, and whatever bears on, or makes up, or shapes our life. It must, therefore, include our companions and friends, our adversaries and our helpers; powers personal and impersonal, things done and things suffered; the seasons and what they bring; the mutations of existence; all years, and whatsoever fills them up. What are all your things? For these are they which, in you, are working together towards an end and a goal. Your things are what you are, and what you have, and what you do; what you take and what you give; whatever has made you, and what you see; the objects for which you live; what most you think about; what occurrences have set up their anniversaries in your life; the meetings and the partings, the accepting and the renouncing; the whole society which environs you without; the little world within your consciousness. Nor limit the words to your own self and this your narrow life. It may be, that far beyond, there are connections between yourself and things outer and distant; with other worlds, with other orders of God's creatures; with points and objects in the vast universe, whence influence

invisible descends, helping to make your life what it is. "All things" may mean to any one of us more than we ever conceived, as well as that with which we are familiar in the daily round, the trivial tasks of our earthly sojourn.

And now, of *the* All Things (τὰ πάντα) what next? This, the starting point of faith and trust. There is no chance, no luck, no haphazard, nor any confused and aimless motion: but "they work," and "work together," and work on a plan, and towards an end. There must be larger and smaller circles in this co-operation: the orderly movement must be through wider or narrower arcs. "All things," as you know and feel them, are few in number to those which another, in some more responsible position, knows and feels. To him who hath five talents, or but one, all things are not what they are to the servant with ten. What are the All Things of one man's life, to the All in All of the life of a nation! But be the scale larger or smaller, these things, more or less, are working, not in aimless way, not merely under guidance; nay, under compulsion; compelled in spite of themselves one way: and together, so that each separate thing must keep towards the end, each must do its part, in one even, onward movement. "All things," saith the Apostle, "work together."

And next, they thus work together for good. It is hard to believe it: it would be harder to deny it. The wish that it were so would be in every human soul, even though we were sure that it could not be so: the opti-

mist's philosophy is but the intense desire and longing of the suffering creation. The apostle says, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain : the earnest expectation of the creature,—the whole created order of things,—waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God ; " we know that it shall come ; that " good is the goal of ill ; " we should wish this, though we knew it not. And yet, how hard to believe it ! How can good come out of crime, sorrow, and sin ? Things in the past that we shudder to recall, things in the present of which we feel that they are too much for our faith ; how can these be working good ? What have they to do with good ? or, what has good to do with them ? Yet, saith the apostle, we know that all things work together, and that they so work together for a sure, though it may be a far off good, in which the evil shall be forgotten, and shall come no more into mind.

Thus far philosophy and revelation, or, in other words, the desire of man and the statement of God, go side by side. But here they separate. Mark what each says. Philosophy affirms that all things work together for good to every one without distinction or difference. God says, " nay, not to all, but to those who love Me." The issue is plain and clear : and experience and reason enforce, as it seems to us, the statement of the Most High.

What proof have men, what proof has any reflecting person, that everything is working out for good, to everybody ? There is nothing in sight to justify the

assertion: there is immeasurable material out of which to frame a contradictory statement. There is nothing in history to support the idea; nor yet in human experience. Nature surely is against it. The impression left on the mind by the facts of nature and of human life, taken alone, is terrible: the darkness is unrelieved until Jesus Christ throws light upon it in His glorious gospel. The phenomena of the natural world, the experiences of separate souls, offer nothing to confirm the idea that good is the ultimate and certain outcome to those over whom sweep the storms of this vexed condition of ours. The speculation is simply a speculation, and nothing more. It is merely a wish unfulfilled. What men see, as they look on the sad course of time, is rather irremediable loss, everlasting punishment, ruins that can never be built again into habitable dwellings, crimes that shall never be condoned, mischief that can never be repaired, and, finally, in death, the general and complete lordship of destructive laws, apparently annihilating creatures once bright, hopeful, and young. We want, at this point, something better than a vague hope, a dim trust. Philosophy gives us, in appropriate terms, a mighty wish: but wishing does not meet the demand. Is there ought better in the Gospel? There is: but it comes in the old gospel way, which draws distinctions among men, and shows to them in God that righteous Judge who shall measure to every man according to the state of that man's conscience and the sum of that man's acts.

Religion draws lines ; it marks men off, it recognizes differences ; it foretells the permanence of character. Men detest religion and revelation, because they want no such thing done ; they call for universal amnesty, for universal salvation : they do not reflect, that there is nothing in nature, in history, in experience, in the order of the dealing of men with each other, in the laws of states, in the instinctive sense of right and wrong in us, to justify that demand. It is simply a wild and eager shout, which wakes no echo anywhere outside the selfish spirit of the sinner. Notwithstanding that vain cry, Revelation proceeds to draw her lines clearly, to make her distinctions. "All things work together for good," not to everybody without discrimination, but to a certain class, to a certain number of men, "to them," namely, "that love God." Surely no sublimer thought was ever put into terms ; surely this is an utterance before which the stammering lips of philosophy should be sealed and dumb.

What is love ? It is our highest inner act. It is affection, it is desire : and highest of all affections and desires is pure love, holy love. It is that in man which awakens earliest, and dies last : love, fixed on some object,—on himself, if on no other,—hath man ever with him during life, and active within, till consciousness ends. And the love of God, what is that ? The highest and strongest power in us, fixed on the loftiest of all conceivable objects ; nay, love finite, fixed and centred on Love infinite, for God tells us of himself, I am Love. This is a passion,

within one poor little human heart: it is a force lodged within a frail vessel of perishable material; it is but a little flame, burning, like a sanctuary lamp, before the ever present, ever beloved Lord. Yet this little force, this little emotion, this little taper-like fire, is *the* Power which controls and commands a universe. To it, all things yield; all things bow and obey it; they work, as docile servants, at its bidding. If in the heart of any human being there burn the fire of the love of God, that person is impregnable; all but omnipotent. That man, that woman, that little child,—for the hearts of children can hold it also,—has the strength, the force, the power of angel and archangel and all the host of the Lord. He may be thwarted, he may be harmed; for a season, if need be, he may be in trouble and sorrow through divers temptations; but at last all shall be well. No spirit of evil, no bad man, no event, no disaster, can break down or beat down the servant whose heart is stayed on his God. Be the sorrow, the distress, the loss what they may; all things *must* work together for good at the end. There is a power above us, which we call Omnipotence: it is God, the God of Love, of love which is pure, just, holy, and consuming like a fire all evil. There is a power below which stops just short of omnipotence: it is the love of that God, burning in human souls, and purifying them of the dross of this lower and material abode, whence they shall be lifted, and taken up into the higher Love, even as flame mounts to flame in the upper air.

Who can doubt that God's word, as thus expressed, presents an idea before which human inventions fade away? Contrast Revelation and Philosophy, from this point of view. What does it amount to? How is man honored, bettered, or blessed by the notion that good shall be the final end to every one, without distinction, and without regard to what we are, or do? What is this, but fatalism in a pleasant, good-natured shape? What is this, but to put us and the things about us, into a monotonous system, which, whatever way it tend, whether to good or evil, to conservation or to destruction, to universal salvation, or to annihilation, makes men mere machines, without accountability, without responsibility? "Let us eat and drink," said the heathen, "for to-morrow we die." Let us do as we like, says the philosopher: all things must come out right at last. Man, at that rate, has no more dignity or honor, than a fly on the walking beam of an engine; the beam works up and down, and the insect goes with it as it moves; there is nothing else to say. That all things work together for our good, no matter how or what we work, is a theory essentially immoral, as destroying the responsibility and accountability of man and denying the eternal justice and righteousness of God: that all things work together for good to every man who loves God, is a divine truth, and a truth moreover which tends to develope the noblest and best within us, to purify motive, to strengthen will, and to make a good man, a godly man, the strongest agent

in this lower world, the assured and rejoicing victor of every foe. For such a one may exclaim, with rapture, whatever be the darkness of the hour, whatever the din of battle about him, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," nor the All-in-All of evil, whatever it be, "shall be able to separate me from the love of my God."

Do you wish a truth to live on? You have it here; nor can there be a thought more precious than this, that, happen what may, all shall be well at last, because our love for God is a stronger power than any without or within; because nothing can keep us back from Him; because once having Him, though not till after distance inconceivable and time immeasurable of distress, debate, and heavy affliction by the way, the past shall seem as nothing to the happy soul in light perpetual. Do you wish a warning as dreadful as ever sounded in human ear? It is in these very words. For to those who do *not* love God, nothing works for good. For them things work after the law of the natural order, on to eternal loss, eternal death. The menace of eternal death is wrapped up inextricably in the promise of eternal life. O then beware lest you be left without shield or defence against the terrible laws which nature shows us written on her severe and stony face. Love is your defence, your only defence. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Why is this the first and great commandment,

unless because the absence of such love involves the loss of all things, of soul, of self, of heaven, and of God?

And, finally, remember: this is assured to us, if we love him. "*We know*," saith the Apostle: and we know it, because this is *according to His purpose*, which cannot be broken, except a man rebelliously set himself against God. It is no arbitrary decree; it is conditional, like every promise and every warning. God has so willed, and so constituted us, and so ordered this world and our state therein, that the love of His children for Him, responding to his first love for his children, shall be the greatest motive power in all the universe, wherever our interests are concerned. They who give him that love are "the called," responding, "according to his purpose." They who refuse Him that love, are the called who did not respond, the tenderly entreated who would not come; these are, by their own act, beyond the reach of His purpose; and God have mercy on them in the end thereof!

O pray for that love of God. Dream of it, desire it, long for it; stir it up within thyself, even though it be but like a dull flame hardly kindled on the stone-cold hearth of thy inner house. With the help of the Lord, and the breath of the Spirit, that feeble spark may be fanned into a great fire, which shall purely purge away thy dross, and make thee some day fit to be numbered with the saints, and able to stand and look full at the figures of the seraphim, where they worship before the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

SERMON IV.

THE PARABLE OF THE CATACOMBS.

ST. JOHN I. 4.

“In him was life : and the life was the light of men.”

UNDERNEATH the ancient capital of the world, and for miles and miles below the surface of the Campagna, between the Tiber, the Alban and Sabine Hills, and the sea, extend those mysterious passages, of which every one has heard, the Roman Catacombs. How far they go, whither they lead, or at what point beneath the fields and mountains they may, or may not terminate, no living man can tell. But we know, from the examinations of the curious and the learned who have explored them for some little distance, at some few points, that they are long and narrow quarries in the rock; the soft volcanic tufa, the softer pozzolano, have been mined, and these underground roads remain. They are but high enough to walk upright through them : they are so straitened in width, that you can touch the sides on either hand as you grope along : they are, of course, unutterably dark and silent : and they are lined with niches, parallel to the pathway, three or four stages in height, containing the bones, or crum-

bled ashes and dust of the dead. He, therefore, who descends into those Catacombs, passes, effectually, into another world. He leaves behind him the light of the sun, the sounds of terrestrial life, and the habitations of men, and goes into the region of the departed. Silence and darkness receive him, and fold him up for a time, as if it were another dead man come down into his own place. If he walk forward, he sees nothing, beyond the very few feet which his feeble torch or flickering candle makes less obscure; if he look up, the rock is there, just above his head; if he look to the right or to the left, he sees the shallow niches, like shelves, one over another, or some faint glimmering of old bones, through chinks in the slabs which defend the tomb; if he strain the eye forward, he is looking into a road of which no human being knows the course or the end; if he look behind him, he sees as little as in front, and feels, with a choking sensation at the heart, that if his light should go out or his guide should forsake him, he could never find his way back. Such are the perils of those mysterious labyrinths of darkness, that no man is permitted to venture into them alone; but only at certain points, and for a short distance, and with every precaution to secure a safe return. For the dead are there; it is a subterranean home of death; and he who should walk there, though but one half hour, without a clue to the path, or a light from the outer world, or a redeemer and a friend to bring him back, would simply disappear, and be heard of, in this upper world, no more.

It must be evident, that in such a place as has been described, light and life would be interchangeable terms ; and so would darkness and death. To be there alone and in the dark, would be, effectively, to be dead, and lost to the world : as has been the case with some, who from time to time have perished in those places. When they lost their way, and could not, by shouts, make any one hear, and knew not where they were, nor which way to turn ; in that instant, all was over and their doom was sealed. Nor did it help the matter, though, for some hours those candles which they held in their hands continued to burn : *that* light was not life, because it had no connection with the fountain of light overhead, with the broad sunshine, the blazing hearth-fires in the abodes of men, or the lights before the altars of the Lord. What would be wanting in such a case, would be, the coming of a light, down into that hollow grave ; the approach of some one who knew the path and could not err, who should hold in his hand a blazing torch or flambeau freshly kindled from the upper realm, and throwing its beams into those shafts and tunnels of oblivion. Such a light would be life to him who walked below : because, in shining upon him, and illuminating his soul, it would link him again with the world of light out of which he had descended into that midnight : it would say : " I came from where the sun is shining, and from the place where men are walking free ; I am of kin to the blueness of the firmament, the green of fields and trees, and the painted

splendors of the visible universe: come up, therefore, from death, for I, the light, am life to thee." No light, of that dark place, could speak thus to a man, or be this to him: because the connection with the source of light would be wanting. There may be, in those Catacombs, some lights peculiar to themselves; some phosphorescent gleamings of old bones, some luminous damp and fire-balls, floating awhile up and down the charnel, and then vanishing. But these could not help the wretch who had got astray; they could but mock at his distress and anguish, an instant, and die into a deeper gloom. No light could serve him, except it were kindled from above. It must be a true light, if it is to give life to man.

Let us hear the parable of the Catacombs, in connection with the words of the text.

"In Him was life: and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness: and the darkness comprehended it not."

He who reads the opening verses of the gospel according to St. John, or the first chapter of his first epistle, must surely feel his weakness and incompetency before those marvellous words. The impression is one which time does not efface; one feels it more deeply, the longer he lives, the nearer he draws towards that world in which we shall see God as He is. The words, at first, sound like easy words: they are not easy, when we come to think of them. Go away by yourself, and read; and it will be as if a hand were knocking at the door of the

heart, whereat the whole soul and spirit must keep still and listen. The voice is hard to understand. It tells some great truth ; of this, at least, we may be sure ; but how to reach that truth, is the question. We may think that we are beginning, after a great while, to see it, yet dimly : we are at a loss to express to others, what we have not the terms to formulate even to ourselves. And, therefore, a parable may help us.

The Catacombs are like the world ; their avenues vague, intricate and unknown, are like its course ; and the man who lives for this world only, is like one who rambles on and stumbles, blindly and to little purpose, down there among the bones and the dust. I mean, that if you take the course of this mortal life by itself ; if you put out of consideration its relations with other and higher existences ; if you will hear nothing of the history of man as related in the Gospel, of the means of his salvation, and of his position as redeemed by Jesus Christ and destined for a glorious immortality beyond the grave and gate of death ; there could not be a better emblem of our life than the dark, blind, trackless and hopeless catacombs of the Campagna. For death and darkness go together ; and these came into our life through sin. Man was created in God's image and likeness ; he was made to be a companion of angels, and a friend of God ; he was the citizen of the immortal land ; he was not made to die. But he sinned : and, at that, he sank into darkness and dust. The order of supernatural and immortal

things for which he was created and to which he still belonged, abode, as of old, in its place : but the earth sank away, under the cloud, and became a house of the dying and the dead. Even so, above the catacombs, the wide Campagna stretches afar ; the stately city stands ; the towers, and palaces, and churches shine in the noon day ; and the mighty dome of Peter, which all the world remembers, and millions revere, looks calmly on the centuries as they melt away around it, leaving it unchanged : but of all this, not one thing is known or heard of, there below ; seeing that “ the dead praise not thee, O Lord, neither all they that go down into silence.” So, when sin invaded it, did this world sink below the line of its original position ; and, so far, that men forgot what it had been ; they thought its fugitive course to be the whole of life, and deemed themselves to be even as the “ brutes that perish.”

In one sense, it is not to be denied, that there was light in the world, still. Our Saviour spoke of it : He said, “ If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.” There was light : but it was the light of this world : and that light was not, and is not, life. Just as a man, cut off from guide, and companion, and familiar friend, might be, and sometimes has been left alone underground, with a taper, or a torch in his hand, so men had light : but it was the light which dureth for a time merely ; which does not help a man to find the way out ; which flickers awhile as

he pursues his uncertain and trembling course, and at the last expires, leaving him in the dark, to shiver, and groan, and die. They had light indeed : but no light of life. They had many candles at their feasts and banquets ; in which the wine sparkled, and jewels flashed, and white necks and shoulders gleamed amid the flushed features of the revellers. Then they had light from ambition and worldly pride, which made a great blaze, for a time, around triumphant conquerors, and emperors, and kings, and gave great lustre to successful men. Again, they had a certain kind of light from the schools of the learned, the crucibles of philosophers, and the studios of painters and sculptors ; much of it, very wonderful and goodly, and such as deserved to be admired, but not for itself alone. Grant that they had such light as this, it was not life to them, and therefore deserved not the name which it bore. The light which was wanted was that of life. A light to bring them up out of the tombs ; not to flicker on the walls and amuse them, or delude them, down below. A light of God, to lead them back to God, "*lumen ad revelationem gentium*," a light lowered into the darkness, to show men the path up the sides of the pit. That alone would have been life to them : and that they had not, and could not have. Until such a light came, they would never have escaped. It is not impossible to imagine,—and let us so suppose, that after a man should have descended into the catacombs and been lost there, Almighty God might miraculously

sustain his life, and let him wander about there, year after year. Just as in the case of that strange myth, the wandering Jew, so it may be imagined that one should be allowed to grope about those quarries in the tufa rock, from generation to generation; and, further, that he should encounter shapes and figures there, one of which should personify the World, with showy attire and great professions, and another should be the Flesh, alluring and seductive to the senses; nor should the Devil himself be absent, with many an art and subtle device, to beguile the hopeless hours. Such things are imaginable; and they can help us to conceive what this world would have been had everything remained as it was at the fall. This world would have been a labyrinth, and existence an aimless walking up and down in the dark. No man would have known his origin, or his end; whence he came, why he was here at all, or whither he was going. Of any higher state as ever having been his, the recollection would have vanished. Of any future, they would have been ignorant, and not more careless than incredulous. Whatever they might have found to amuse, to interest, to please them here, would have had no reference beyond itself: the light of this world would have been that of a dying fire, a smoking lamp, a sputtering billet of half-charred wood; their years a dream, their existence aimless and inexplicable; their last end, when it came, without hope.

Now let us look from that scene of darkness, up to God. "In him was life." In Him who was in the beginning, and who was with God, and who was God. Whatever is in Him is eternal, and therefore the life here spoken of is "that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." And why was it so manifested? Even because we were made partakers of it; for man was made to live, and not to die; to live forever, to sit in heavenly places, immortal and blessed. That eternal life which was in Him, was given unto us in measure, as we were able to receive it; and that "life was the light of men." To live in God, implies seeing as God sees, loving as God loves, willing as God wills. One cannot live in God, partake of God's eternal life, and yet be in darkness, or ignorance, or error, any more than in corruption, and rebellion, and crime. God's life is the light of him who enjoys it: and since man was made partaker thereof, it was the light of man. In this respect the life which is in man differs from that which is in other created things. There is life, also, in them; there is a life in the living waters, and a life in the trees of the wood; there is a life in the beasts of the field, and in the pure skies over us; and everywhere throughout the universe there is life. But this is not light to those things that possess it, as the life of God is light to man; and still less is any life in creatures a light to us. That life is not immortal; and, therefore, the light which it affords is soon extinguished. It is enough for this

mortal day ; it gives some shining, through the world : it casts reflection on those clouds of sin and sorrow which overhang the scene ; it bideth for a time, for a year or two, for a day ; and then it wavers, and dies out. But man must live on : the spirit cannot die with the body. It must have a better light than this : and that light is "the life" which is "in Him." Wherefore, when God created him, He gave him of His own spirit ; He gave him the power of an endless life ; and He showed man that it was so ; for He said, of the forbidden fruit, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This implied, "Thou shalt never die, if thou dost believe and obey." That promise of immortality was indeed the lamp unto his feet and the light unto his paths : the life, which he shared, and had received from God, was the light of man.

And when that light had gone out ; when man had fallen ; and when this world became as dark catacombs, housing within its hollow places the dead and lost ; still did the light shine in the darkness, although the darkness comprehended it not. Christ brought it back ; for of Him it is said that "He brought life and immortality to light." How could this have been, unless life and immortality had been buried up and hidden from human knowledge before ? It was so : men had forgotten their origin, their Father, their old citizenship, their home ; scarcely could they believe that they were immortal. No longer was it remembered that there had been an

Eden, and a tree of life ; it was no longer in their thoughts that God made and created the heavens and the earth ; but they thought that the world came by chance or accident, and is governed by blind fate ; and as for sanctity, and purity of life, and patient endurance of earthly ills in hope of the recompense of the reward, or the heaven of the faithful and the beatific vision of the Lord God Almighty, they knew not of those things : and when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, they mocked, nor feared the judgments, nor understood the mercy and goodness of the Eternal. On such men, therefore, did the light shine once more ; after a long time it was revealed to them, and still, as before, it was life which was manifested to them, and that life was their light. Christ came down ; He had, in His humanity, the life which had been ever in Him as God : wherefore as a man, living and immortal, He came ; He stood in the dark throat of the avenues of death, and called up and down the gorge of that desolation, with a voice which struck the sides of the many slabbed shelves of ashes and dust, and the whole place trembled and shook, as the glass in the windows of the church shakes and rattles when the great pipes speak in mighty sound : and men, listening, heard words which ran, in substance, thus :

“ I am the life ; and therefore am I the Light of man. Look unto Me, and be ye saved. See in Me, Him who alone can tell you whence ye came and whither ye are

going. I will explain the past, and I will make the future sure, if, for this present, ye will believe in Me. For I have received, as man, that life which I have eternally as God : and I give to men of that which I, as man, have received. The life is therefore yours once more: accept it, preserve it, and clouds and darkness will flee away. Come out from the world. Many lights are shining there; bright, showy, splendid; but delusive, and presently to expire. Such lights can show you nothing of yourselves, nothing of God, nothing of heaven; nothing but the greatness and depth of that darkness in the midst of which they glimmer for a season, and by which they are hereafter to be quenched.

“ The light of this world is not that by which ye are to walk ; your light is the life which is in Me. Ye are immortal ; the world must disappear. The light of an immortal life is more than what suffices for this transient scene. If you walk by the light of this world, you will be left in the dark by-and-by ; for that light will go out anon, and if you have no other you must perish. The sun rules the day : but every twenty-four hours the sun sets and the day is at an end. The shining of the candle giveth light to all that are in the house ; yet would men fade away if this alone were left to them, and they should see the sun no more. At last, it shall be so : the sun will go down to rise not again. And every lamp and torch will be put out ; and the world shall be black and still. What is to become of the man who had no light but

that of this world, dying hourly, and then, at last, dead ? Wherefore, come to Me. I, your Saviour, am your light, because I am your life. The light which I show you is above the brightness of the sun ; the life which I manifest to you is the life of God. Both these are yours, since both are one ; if ye will but hear me, and believe, and follow Me up, out of the vaults, into the sunshine of the immortal day of God."

Thus doth He continually address a dying world, and us in the midst thereof. Let us follow, and walk in His light, that so walking in the light as He is in the light, we may live with Him forever.

SERMON V.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

I TIMOTHY III. 16.

“And without contradiction, great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

ONE day a number of persons dissatisfied with themselves and with the way they were living, sat together talking of the means of leading a better and higher life. Observed, they were approached by others, each having some advice to give. The first said : “Why speak thus ? Why not be content ? This savors, I fear, of religion : and religion means melancholy, moping, severity. Don’t become religious ; for if you do, the charm of life will be lost. Enjoy this world, while it lasts ; eat, drink, and, when the time comes, die.” But they hearkened not ; they had heard that too often ; they were past that ; they had outgrown the childish mind, and were looking for some better thing.

Another came, and said : “You are right to seek that better thing. Love virtue, goodness, truth ; lead sweet and beautiful lives ; and so find happiness.” But they asked, “Pray be more definite ; tell us what those words

mean, and how to lead such lives." Then he said, "I fear to become dogmatic; my speech must be general, broad, and lofty; I can add no more."

And then a third said: "To become virtuous you must practice the virtues; you must exercise yourselves in temperance, fortitude, patience, courage, and the like." But when they retorted: "Yes; but we have no strength; we are weak; we cannot resist temptation; the power we need is not in us; where shall it be looked for?" there was again, no reply.

And so they waited, till at last came one more. And he said: "You wish to lead a high, pure, noble life. The world, with its pleasures, fails you. High sounding talk of rhapsodists fails you. Counsel to the practice of morality fails you. And yet you are earnest and sincere. Behold, I show you a mystery. I begin with no precepts, with no poetic flights, with no hope in the power of man. I take another departure. Listen. You must begin by accepting a faith. Without all contradiction, godliness is a great mystery. It begins, and is to be effected in, by, and through One who was manifest in a human body, made and kept righteous in a human soul, seen of angels in that estate, preached unto the Gentiles as the Life and Desire of all nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory. Apart from Him, you seek to reform and repair your desolate and unsatisfactory lives in vain."

Let us take these great words of the Apostle, and con-

sider what they mean. That one verse gives heads for at least five Books of Theology. The words fall, like blow on blow, perfecting a wonderful work of art. Here are five brief sentences, each of two words in the Greek; ten words altogether. Let a man sit down and try to draw out the meaning, and how much time would he need, what thought, what intellectual power, what knowledge! The Incarnation of the Eternal God; the Sanctification of Man, made holy in body and soul; the secret of the order and service of the Angels; the history of the Church; the triumph of faith; the life of the world to come: all are here.

Now, where is this marvellous summary of doctrine introduced? That is one of the most striking of the features of the case. It comes in a letter setting forth the practical duties of the clergy and the people. A chief pastor is writing to one of his colleagues, to tell him how he ought to live, and how to train his flock. This letter is nothing, if not practical. He writes about charity, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; he bids them be sober and temperate in meats and drinks, and not brawl, nor tell lies; he gives directions about the organized work of the Church, and even goes down to the dress and ornaments of the women. Yet in everything that he says, he suggests a Mystery at the bottom of the whole system. It is called the Mystery of Godliness. And that mystery is summed up in the style and with the precision of a Creed. And this little creed is at the end of the third

chapter, there being six in the epistle. It is exactly half way through ; like a pivot and centre on which the rest turn. Nay, what is true of this epistle is true of all. St. Paul is at once the most practical and the most dogmatic of men. If he bids you to the practice of any virtue, there is a doctrinal reason for it ; and whenever he teaches a dogma, he hastens to show its practical necessity.

Now that is the point which I call you first to note : for if ever there was an age which required the Pauline method, it is this age in which we live.

For now men talk thus : What need is there of doctrinal teaching ? We want the practical. Forms of faith are nothing ; creeds are nothing ; pure morality is the object at which to aim. Let the Creeds and the Churches go ; and let us have simple duty, and good living, honesty, virtue, and benevolence, and culture ; no dogmas, no tenets are required. So they are speaking. And they express the prevailing thought of the times ; it is, as one might say, the creed of the public that they will have no creed ; works, by all means, but works without faith.

Now, whatever worth there may be in this way of looking at the subject, one thing only concerns us Christians : it is certain, that this was not the idea of St. Paul and the other teachers sent by Christ ; it is certain that nothing could have been more foreign to their thoughts. The apostolic preaching effected a cleansing of the world, a washing out of the stables in which the filth of ages lay

in heaps: but it was not by preaching moral duties alone that they accomplished the result. Their teaching was dogmatic from first to last; morality was built up on a purely theological basis; they began with the "Articles of the Faith," with a "Mystery," with a "Form of sound words;" and the life of the soul in piety and godliness which replaced, by degrees, the habit of pagan sin, was nothing more nor less than a Creed put into practice. If that mind be in you which was in Christ's apostles, you will feel, that as for expecting a pure and sweet life of godliness without the Creed, one might as well expect to find fruit growing on nothing, or look to see capitals of columns in the air, with no shafts to sustain them.

Let us work this thing out in our thoughts, till we see it just as it is. The text contains at least five strong dogmatic statements. St. Paul says of these that they are the mystery of godliness. Now, by godliness he means what we understand by virtuous living, piety, devotion, and a truly religious character. The Greek word translated godliness, is *ἐνσεβεία*; it has not the name of God in it; it means, simply a pure, good, excellent life. Now observe, the apostle is not talking about a mystery of theology. No one, I presume, would have objected, had he announced a most abstruse and incomprehensible creed, and said, "this is the great mystery of theology." People might have replied; "you may keep your mystery to yourself; we cannot fathom it, nor is it worth while to do so, for it means nothing to us practically, and

such are all theological statements, mere mysteries and marvels for the discussion of the curious, and the entertainment of idlers in the vineyard." But St. Paul states his creed ; and then he says, this is the mystery, not of theology, but of simple daily practice ; this is the key, the charm, the "open sesame," of piety, devotion, and holiness of life. Now do you appreciate what this means to you and to us all ? You must sometimes have thought about your own way, your own duty, your possibilities. You must sometimes have thought about such matters as this: how to be better men and women ; how to become true, consistent Christians ; how to pray better and more earnestly, how to read your Bible to your soul's comfort, how to cut off sins, to shun temptation, to do some good work in your time, to lead honest and true lives. Sometimes you must think about these things, either as persons meditating a complete reformation in their habits and acts, or as desirous of reviving in their souls a love of God, a zeal and devotion, which once were there, but seem, of later years, to have been dying out. Now when such thoughts come, remember this ; that St. Paul regards every wish, every effort in the direction of spiritual culture and moral reform as connected with the holding of a positive faith, with believing certain formal propositions, with confessing certain articles of faith, which indeed are neither few in number, nor easy to grasp, but so numerous that he arrays them under five heads, and

so profound that each might expand into a volume of theology.

It is necessary for us to insist, with our own treacherous spirit, that they shall see this exactly as it is: how St. Paul and the Lord's Apostles put the case. It is not the world's way of putting it. It is not your way of putting it, so far as you are under the influence of the spirit of the world and of the age. You can decide, by a very simple test, whether you have been misled by that false spirit. If you say, "I cannot bear to hear dogmatic sermons; I cannot listen to them; I want, always, to hear about practical duty;" you have expressed concisely the grand fallacy of Antichrist. No doubt there are men who preach very hard and very dry dogmatic sermons; and it is a pity that they could not make them tolerable, at least, if not interesting: but at all events they are doing their duty, however clumsily. It is a very difficult thing to preach the dogmas of the Church in such a way that the people shall take pleasure in hearing them; but *not* to preach them, would be to push away the shaft of the column expecting the capital to stand alone without support. This Christian religion, which has re-made so much of the world as has heard it, and which is all-in-all to you for time and eternity, is in all its parts traceable to dogma; the outward, the practical, the moral, the æsthetic, the lovely in it, is anchored beneath the surface and held fast and firm by the Articles of the Christian Faith. There is not a work of

mercy, of charity, of goodness done in the Church to-day, that may not be traced back to this fact: that God has proposed to the human intellect and spirit certain statements reducible to theological propositions, and that the human intellect and spirit, laying hold of them by faith, has found a means of visible expression for them in those very works. To talk of keeping the works and letting go the faith, is like desiring to keep in your possession a body from which the soul has passed away.

But now, lest haply the preacher should be taken to task for not being sufficiently practical on the present occasion, let him suggest an application of this subject to those here present who know that they are far away from God and would walk more closely with Him.

Here, in the text, is a cycle of wonders, all bearing directly on the daily life, and tending to make us godly men and women. And here are you, in your house of death, living your life from day to day. You are not what you ought to be; not earnest, not religious, not thoughtful. You lead a poor and low kind of a life. Now why should that grand cycle of wonders come looming towards you? Why should the heavens be bowed down, and why should God take flesh, and why should angels bestir themselves, and other like marvels be wrought? Why should Apostles preach and die, and why should the stories of the saints be told in your ears, and why should the heavens open to receive the ascend-

ing Christ? Were these things done for you? What made it necessary? Why would it not have answered as well to write out a list of moral maxims, and talk to you for fifteen or twenty minutes about the importance of virtue and the value of self-control? What is there in you, apparently, so infirm and feeble, to call for these tremendous manifestations from another world?

Do you not know? Do you not feel? There is nothing incongruous in thus matching God against man, because there is in man one thing which makes him actually stronger than God. Granting that you are worth saving,—and that may be assumed, for there is no worth like that of an immortal soul,—whatever force is necessary must be applied. But there is one thing in you which nothing but that special force known as the Grace of God can conquer; one thing which has yet defied, and now defies, and may to all eternity defy, even the Almighty. That is your will.

Between you and your God stands one thing only, your will. Between you and a better life, with light, peace, rest, and loveliness of soul and purity of heart, stands one thing, your will. It must act, before your condition can be improved. It never acts without a motive strong enough to move it. Talking to you will not do; advice will not do; human influence will not do; the glittering generalities of moral reformers, philanthropists, and the pseudo-Christian rhapsodists will not do. The power of God must be put forth to make you a godly

man, a godly woman ; nothing short of it will answer, seeing that you are surely able to fight against God. And, therefore, to conquer you, was He manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, received up into glory.

But therein lies the terrible character of your position. If your will be not reached, and broken, in its firm set against God, nothing can be done. But it cannot be reached, nor broken, except through this mystery of Godliness of which the apostle speaks, and on which alone he relies. The knowledge of certain truths is the moral defence of the social order ; it is the first requisite to the health and salvation of your soul. And yet you live on, busying your thoughts about every thing except those truths. And when there comes in your heart, an aspiration towards a better life,—and surely it does come, for there are tender spots in your conscience, and there are great possibilities and potencies in you,—that aspiration never gets beyond a sentiment, nor determines the one supreme question, What must I believe and do to be saved ?

For I would ask : What pains do you take to learn the truth ? How often do you read your Bible ? And when you read it, do you read for mere form's sake, or with the wish to get at the meaning ? How much of your time do you give to study of your Creed ? How much to church going, and reflection on the truths there told you, to thoughts on death, judgment, heaven, and

hell? There are excellent manuals of Household Theology, of Church History, of Practical Religion: which of them do you read on system? What do you remember of them? What do you know of the dogmas, of the faith, of the precepts of the Church, of the lives of God's saints? What reasonable account could you give of the faith that is in you? Nay, what *is* your faith? Is it alive? or is it dead? You have moments,—let us hope they are many,—when you long for a closer walk with God. It may be had, only, through the knowledge of the mysteries of God. Practically to you those mysteries are like a sealed book. “And the vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. (*Isaiah* xxix. 11, 12.)

But if your will cannot be reached through those celestial and superhuman mysteries, how is it to be reached at all? What can man effect, when God fails? And does not God seem to have failed in the effort to bring you to Himself? “He was manifest in the flesh.” You hear that said; you hardly know what it means; you say, it is theology; you dismiss it as unpractical. “He was justified in the Spirit;” His human soul and will was taken into perfect union with the divine will. Again you say, “I do not understand it, and I do not care to

study and find out the meaning." "He was seen of angels." Well; you feel no interest in the spiritual and supernatural realms; this earth is enough for you, while it lasts. "He was believed on in the world." What is that to you? You have no time to give to religion. So it goes. None of these things move you. But if they do not, what can? What motive can ever constrain you to amend your life, and become a practical Christian? Tell me; is anything else helping you? Is any person, not a Christian, helping you? Is any one of the children of the world now trying, as your God has tried, and as His servants have tried, to reach your rebel will and turn it towards righteousness and truth? Where among these your companions of the hour are any who are seeking to win you to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

It comes down to this, dear brother. Until you believe your creed, intelligently, and lovingly, you will not, you cannot change. If you are ever to change, it must be by embracing with devotion the Mystery of Godliness; by accepting the creed, doing the works of faith, and obeying the precepts of the Church. That is our parting word for yourself, dear soul. And in general, let us say, in conclusion, this. If love grows cold, and immorality increases, and society becomes less pure, it is only because faith has declined. And they about us who make it their business to break down the faith, to exchange the old, strong terms of the creed for

feeble platitudes, and muddle the thoughts of men till they can no longer say that they believe any one thing at all, these persons may set themselves up for apostles of a new era of morality and virtue, yet they are in reality helping the men below them who aim at the general destruction of society. Godliness is linked with a system of mysteries to be held by the intellect and loved with all the heart. It stands or falls with them. The Mystery of Godliness, the creed in practice, reformed and purified the world. If the world should ever fall back again into the gall of the old bitterness and the bond of the old iniquity, it will be when the mystery has been denied by an intellect which is stranded on the shoal of its own devices, and rejected by a heart which, loving the creature more than the Creator, has lost even the desire for the things prepared for us by God in the heavenly kingdom.

SERMON VI.

WORK AND LABOR CONTRASTED.

PSALM CIV. 23.

“ Man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening.”

It might be inferred, from the way in which work and labor are mentioned in this verse, that the sacred writer thought them to be substantially the same. In such a conclusion, however, we could not concur; for it is clear, on reflection, that the words have different meanings, and carry distinct impressions to the mind. Work and labor are not the same. Work is the operation of body or spirit: but labor is not simply work, but work attended by fatigue, weariness, and pain. It is said that man goeth forth to his work and to his labor, because, for us, work and labor run into each other; we cannot have the former without the latter; what we do in this world, from the morning of our days until the evening, is done with toil and care, and amid difficulties and vexations. But it was not so from the beginning, and it shall not be so, with us, forever. The work of Almighty God, for instance, when He created the heavens and the earth, was a work without labor, as any one who reflects on it

must perceive ; and although it is said that He rested, yet the term is to be understood in a figurative sense, as meaning that He brought that special work to an end ; while we may remark, moreover, that it is not said of Him that He rested from His labors, but that He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He created and made. Thus, also, in the course of nature, moving on steadily after fixed laws of God's appointment, there is work, but no labor ; in smoothness and silence the great globe of the earth revolves, showing alternate faces to the sun, and, without an effort or a trace of difficulty, it rolls through space on that path traced for it by the finger of the Invisible. Not till we come to man in his fallen estate, do we find labor and work inseparably united. Of the former he knew nothing at the first : he had work to do, of course : for he had to dress the garden and keep it ; and though he had a law to obey, yet obedience was easy, because sin had not entered into the world. At last, with sin, came labor, as one of its results ; pain and fatigue, hard work, before that, however, unknown ; toil and sweat, rebuke and chastening by the heavy hand, and heart-sickness and horrible dread and fear, with which for his attendants man has carried on his work ever since. For him to work is also to labor ; and it must be so ; we cannot have the one without the other. He goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening ; when, at length, he shall rest from his labors, and his works shall follow him into

that other world, where God shall take account of us all, and fix our eternal condition.

Such is the distinction between work and labor. Work is whatever can be done, by God, or angels, or natural agents, or by any creature; but labor is work done with fatigue, and weariness, and pain. These are the characteristic signs of labor, as every use of the word shows. The primal sorrow of woman, when she suffers the doom uttered long ago in the garden, is called by that name. And when, in tempests on the sea, ships pitch and roll heavily, they are said to labor. And of all the trades of men, that of the laborer bespeaks the lowest point of hardship and toil, which no one chooses, who can have a higher station or a brighter lot. And labor is the work of man. For the time these two are united. They do not belong to each other as a matter of course: they have no natural relationships: they were not together at first; they are not to be together always. Labor is an after comer: labor has overtaken work, and afflicts it. Labor is an invader, it weighs down work, as the old man of the sea oppressed the sailor in the story. All our work is mixed up with labor: as the wise King says, "All things are full of labor." This is true, of religion, as it is true of everything else that concerns us. And to this point, as a practical one, I would direct your thoughts.

Now it is not necessary to prove that the Christian, as such, has a work to do. You need no arguments on

that head; it is a point which has been repeatedly brought before you. The Gospel is not a system for the indolent and inactive; its design is not to free us from the necessity to work; but, rather, it enjoins work upon us, and a more thorough work than that required by any other religion. We have much to do; and what we have to do does not lie on the surface, for the commandments of Christ must be understood as including the spirit, together with the letter. All this is perfectly familiar to you. But it is, perhaps, a less familiar thought, that the Christian's work, being that of man here in this world, is not a work only, but a labor also; that it is not easy nor light; that it is hard to do, and costs, like all labor, much toil and fatigue, and weariness of heart and flesh; not because the service of our Master is, in itself, intrinsically, a hard and painful one, but because we make it such, and cannot help making it such, by that native opposition to it, and reluctance to do it, which every life exhibits. And this thought, that there is labor, in the evil sense, in all Christian work, is less familiar than the mere naked, simple fact that Christians as such have work to do.

For there are many false ideas about that service of God to which we are called in the Gospel; and they tend to this conclusion, that it must be a sweet and easy and delightful thing to be a Christian. And so, in one sense, it is; but not in the sense in which people generally use those words; it is so comparatively, but not absolutely,

nor does it always seem so at the time. If any one finds it sweet, delightful and easy, to bear the cross, and mortify the flesh, to resist temptation and school himself in silence and submission, to practice self-denial, and feel the burden and heat of the day, to go and come in season and out of season, where good is to be done; let him be thankful; but, with most of us, it is not so. In all our work, whatever intention hallow it, we find labor; and it seems hard, in certain respects, and sometimes so very hard, that we are all but ready to give out; and this is so whether we be working for ourselves or for others.

For instance, it is a very hard thing to break off from a sin which we have come to love; or to correct an old habit, and form a new one and a better. Many are trying to do this, and have been trying, perhaps, for some years, yet they seem to have made scarcely any perceptible improvement. The sins of our youth possess us still; it looks as if we should never be rid of them. Who that knows his own heart can doubt that efforts at its true reformation imply and involve labor, painful, anxious, weary labor? Again and again does the penitent tell God of the sorrow of his soul, and in the very same words, confessing the same thing, over and over. Is there no remedy? There is; because the remedy for every spiritual and moral evil is in the Gospel. But the remedy is discipline: and discipline is very hard work. There is not a fault of our nature that cannot be corrected: there is not a habit of sin in any one here present that cannot be re-

formed. There is not an idle, or lazy, or luxurious, or hot-tempered, or vain, or sceptical, or sensual man or woman, but could become a consistent, exemplary Christian. But such changes are not to be had for the thinking about them, nor for the desiring them, nor even for the praying for them. It is well to think of being better; it is well to wish we were better; it is well to pray to be better. But neither thinking, nor wishing, nor praying is quite enough; all three together are not enough. At last there must be hard work, labor, a struggle with self, which will be anything but pleasant, and is probably the very thing which we shun. That is the last; that makes the life weary for a season; that is what comparatively few will take in hand. There may be some who say they find no labor in their service. Be it so; but let them have charity for others whose experience is different; who strive, and toil, and wonder at themselves, and are cast down so low that they seem to be next door to despair. And, to take another view of the case, when we find, as is not uncommon, some who profess the wish to sanctify their lives, and yet complain that they do not succeed, the fact no doubt is, that they have failed, not in their thoughts, nor in their aims, nor in their prayers, but in the hand-to-hand struggle, in the clench, the wrestling, the bitter and painful hard work. They have forgotten that all real work of ours must be full of labor. They feel pain; it is not the pain of putting constraint on themselves, it is not the pain of checking

rising temper, or accepting humiliation, or giving a flat refusal to any sense that invites to sin ; but it is the pain of fearing that you cannot be what you wish to be *without* pain. This is the sorrow of many a so-called penitent ; to feel that one cannot become holy, pure, peaceful, calm, without first suffering keenly and going through a strife against which all the being protests.

And so, again, of work for others : it is as full of labor as work for ourselves. Corporal works of mercy are done for the most part with more or less of bodily fatigue ; and spiritual works of mercy, however good their intention, often bring great anxiety of mind, discouragement, and disappointment. One grows very weary, with visiting and nursing the sick, or teaching the ignorant, or counselling the doubtful, and dealing with sinners for their good : while ingratitude and coldness often follow on such work, and leave no memory of it all but the bitter reflection that, though we strove hard, we strove in vain. These are the labors which go along with our works, and make them heavy and distressing, causing us to long for rest. And yet we dare not rest, or cease from work, until the end come : because the work is to live and to be imputed to us, eternally, for weal or woe. We must endure the pain and weariness, as knowing that without these, as accompaniments, the work cannot be done ; and that, unless the work be done, we shall have nothing to follow us at the last, nothing to show when we are called to

account, and therefore nothing to reward. For the sake of the work that shall remain, we must sustain the labor which is to end.

This is, of course, the practical conclusion, which they should be urged to consider who find it a great effort to do their duty, and who think perhaps that they will never improve. To them we say : You ought to know, that it is of the nature of things that your struggle is what it is. Labor, pain, toil, and everything most repugnant to your self-indulgent spirit, attend upon, and are inseparably united to the work which is set before you to accomplish. It *is* so, it *must* be so, it always *will* be so. You are not an angel, nor a pure, unfallen being, which can do its work easily, tranquilly, and without effort. You are a sinner ; you have a will which opposes the Holy Spirit, a body which demands indulgence to its appetites, a mind clouded by false notions on a hundred points ; and you cannot do the pure and holy works enjoined by the perfect law of God, except under protest from a thousand desires within you and in the face of a general resistance from your sinful, disordered, disorganized being. You must understand this ; you must expect it. You must expect to find it hard to pray, hard to fix your attention on the things which belong to your peace ; very hard to leave off sinning, to live peaceably with those around you, to speak the simple truth ; very, very hard to deny yourself luxuries, to keep down the risings of vanity, to suppress unholy

thoughts, to restrain your appetite, to eat and drink no more than is sufficient, to get up in time for your prayers, to keep your temper under provocation. This is the work of the Christian ; to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And it is turned to a labor for us, because of the contrary wishes and the ceaseless wanderings of our evil mind and unruly will.

Again, consider, that all who ever came to anything in His Church, have felt and admitted this conjunction of labor and work. It was preeminently so with the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour. Hear the words of St. Paul : how he speaks of toil, and work, of his Christian life as a warfare and a race, of keeping under his body, and of being crucified as to the affections and lusts of the flesh. Or listen to such remarks as this : that he only shall be saved who persevereth unto the end ; and that we have to “work out our salvation,” not easily and sweetly, but “with fear and trembling ;” and that “now for a season” we must be content to be “in heaviness through manifold temptations.” The representations so familiar to us of the facility and happy carelessness of a Christian life, are pictures drawn from the imagination. Men invented theories, doing away with disagreeable facts ; and thus we have those pleasing but delusive sketches, in which what is a stern, and solemn, and in some measure a sad discipline, is represented as if it were as light as the pastimes of revellers on a summer’s day. Let us not be deluded with such visionary cloud-

painting : but let us go to the Gospels and Epistles and to the lives of the Saints, to find out the real nature of our calling.

And then, persevere : for the actual order of things cannot be changed. While life lasts, labor lasts : know this, prepare thyself, and be strong and patient. Work ; enduring the pain ; work, though it distress thee ; for so it must be. We cannot alter facts ; we need not affect to conceal them from ourselves. We must accept our lot, and do what we can, and wait for the hour when the labor and the work shall be separated, and the former shall cease and be forgotten, and the latter shall remain with us, the proof of our fidelity and the guarantec of an eternal reward.

For there comes, from afar off, and in the last book of the Word of God, a prophecy of these greatly desired events : “ I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, from henceforth, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord : even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” This shall be fulfilled, in its time. The labors shall come to an end ; from them, shall His children cease and have rest ; as if the burden which every man bore in life had fallen from his back, and the dust and sweat of long toil were brushed away. The labor shall cease and be no more ; but the work is imperishable : “ their works do follow them ; ” not their labors, but their works. The work of a true and godly Christian life, is more enduring than

the heavens, because it abides, in its reward, with the Most High, forever and ever. It was accomplished with difficulty; it cost a great sum, in toil and patience; and around it, while it was in doing, there formed a crust of roughness and hardness, through which its real quality could scarcely be seen. Labors of all kinds attended on it, while it was growing to perfection; and these transferred a certain painfulness and sorrow through the whole life, such as befit a place and a state like this present world and our actual condition. But these accretions, in the end, will drop off and the work of the Christian, to which he was called in the gospel day, will come out resplendent and perfect. When the hour is arrived, that he must go out of the world, the works which he did in faith shall follow him. They are all placed to his account, beyond. They shall speak for him, at the last day. "He goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening." Then, when the evening is come, he shall lie down to rest from his labors; and his works, rendered pure and acceptable through the all-prevailing merits and intercession of the Saviour, shall shine in the sight of God, and even perhaps in the memories of men, with a steady light like that of the evening stars which look down upon the grave in which he sleeps.

SERMON VII.

THE POWER OF THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.

I CORINTHIANS I. 18.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness ; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.”

NOT long ago, a certain man, whose name it is unnecessary to mention, was lying on his death-bed. To him went one whose office was to prepare him for departure out of this world. They who are bidden to that ministry have a choice : either to speak for the Lord and in the Lord's name, or else to give their own opinions and utter such words as they think reasonable and correct. In this case, the dying man was addressed somewhat as follows :

“Dear brother, you are going away from us. You have spent some fifty years in this world. You ought to have given those years to God. They were the time of sowing ; of them must you reap. Yet you threw them away. You lived, alas ! to yourself. You are without any profit, you have no fruit to show ; empty has been your life, barren, miserable. What can I do for you ? What can you do for yourself ? What can God do ?

You have, perhaps, one week to live. Even if you could spend that one week religiously and devoutly, it could not balance the years that are past. The account against you is too heavy: it weighs you down. You cannot atone for the lost time; a few days now would amount to nothing by way of sacrifice. If you could live some years, you might set it right: but for that it is too late. And you must reap even as you have sowed. I know of nothing to add. So far as I see and believe, nothing ever happened since the world began, which bears directly on this question. Stern, sad, and awful is the outlook. God have mercy on your soul! Farewell. Take with you a brother's love, a brother's sympathy: all he can give indeed. Pass into the shadow, ready for whatever awaits you there."

And Jesus Christ?—"Well: what of Him? We must look at this in the clearer light of to-day; the world endures nothing beyond the natural ken of man. What of Jesus Christ? What comfort, what help, in Him? He was holy, godlike, divine. Manifestation of the Deity, mirror of all virtue, veiled prophet, ideal man, He was a noble, a wondrous example to you. He showed you how to live. He proved to you that you could have led a beautiful life. But you did not imitate that example. You did not follow those divine and touching suggestions. What then? The thought of Him is a thought of despair. The sight of that Ideal, with the sense of your contempt for it, must intensify your pain. Radi-

ant, spotless, inexplicable Son of Mary ! Thy wondrous, Thy perfect ethical example judges us, and leaves us without hope. We know not of other relation between us and Thyself: and in this there is no consolation when the days are gone in which we might have copied that model, and might, in measure, have succeeded, so far, at least, as to find favor with God and men, yet we did not."

Thus am I told that they conversed, the dying man and his intellectual and conscientious priest. And what is there here which horrifies us as Christians and Churchmen? Why do we feel, that it will never do to be talked to like that when our time comes? What was left out in that dialogue? What was tacitly denied? And why was it denied? Actually, this is the residuum which is left of religion, after certain changes have occurred in the views of men, after certain ideas floating in the air about us, have gained a lodgment in the mind. And it is most important for us to see what has been taken away and what has been left. For listening to that dialogue and interpreting by their words the thoughts of the speaker, one perceives that there is something right and true, at which the living man is aiming in his censure, and which the dying cannot deny. The charge against the waster of his talents, though terrible, is just; and he, honest, cannot defend himself. But both have left out something. There is, outside their thoughts, what they do not see. The lack of it, in their

prospect, has utterly overwhelmed them : because blind to it, they present that pitiful aspect : the one lying there, a prey to the "fearful looking for of judgment," the other standing by, mute and sad, with no message of hope or comfort which he feels himself conscientiously free to deliver, and able only to mingle his tears of compassion with his brother's tears of despair. Surely something more is wanted, in addition to what we have : for here are only a conviction of the beauty of virtue, a portrait of one who was its perfect living manifestation, and the damning knowledge that the man has failed to attain it.

First, all was true and good that was said about the duty of that wretched man. To lead pure, high-toned, clean lives ; to do virtuous actions, to keep from what is low and bad ; to be true to God and faithful to one's friend ; to be charitable, open-handed, generous, kind and helpful ; to roll up a great mass of laudable deeds, making of them the real investment of these fleeting days : God, and nature, and each man's conscience declare this to be our duty. On the other hand, to throw time away : to spend it in idleness and sloth, to give it up to vanity and sin : this is shocking to every unwarped mind. So clear and necessary are these conclusions, that some men, seeing them distinctly, make out nothing more. The whole of Religion seems to them to consist in the pursuit of moral purity, sweetness, loveliness of spirit, self-control. On these things the changes are rung, as on a

melodious chime; these are the sum and substance of the Evangel. True religion is something detachable from doctrines and dogmas; it must be carefully separated from the theology of the Creed; it is in the man, not outside; in his soul and spirit; it is, substantially, an inner sweetness, a mildness, a beautiful character distilling fragrance through the social system. But what if a man do not attain to that character? What if he goes on like a spendthrift, or at least indifferent, never seeing, never attaining? And what if sickness, or age, or threatening of the end, come at length and show him that his life was a failure, and that the beauty is but ashes, and that the graces once possible can never be attained? What if one having heard the praise of virtue, and having tried to follow and attain, sink back in despair, crying, "In me is no good thing. What I would I do not, and what I would not, that I do. To will these lovely things is present with me, but how to perform I find not!" Alas! at such a word, the philosopher religionist is silent. He is beyond his depth. He cannot meet the difficulty before him. The theory is beautiful as a theory. To fit it into a place in a world like this, is what its authors cannot do. They cannot make it work alone; they do not; it is but failure on failure. This natural world, including all that is in the heart of man as he came into it, and all the conceivable motives that can be brought to bear on him from its vast and varied storehouses: this is exhausted. No more can be brought in; and the priest

of the Natural World,—whatever garb he wear, or by whatever name he may be called,—seeing nothing more, and dreading to compromise himself by meddling with aught beyond Nature, must simply let the sufferer go, unshriven and unaided. One unhappy, unsatisfied death-bed breaks the scheme to pieces, as to comfort for the miserable or hope for him that is ready to die. Nay, the scheme is useless everywhere, and all the time. For life is but a drawing on towards death; and while man wastes away, this doctrine about sweetness and loveliness and self-control as the sum total of religion, is left at loose ends. Religion comes to no more than a kind of progressive inward purification, to be effected by our loyalty to certain ethical and moral principles. This man had made no such progress; his life was not the sweet and lovely life of that transcendental scheme; what *can* be said, to help or comfort, beside this utter wreck? What more can be done, save to await the end in silence and sadness, and then close the eyes and bind up the chin?

Now let us see what was left out. It is good and true, that talk about the beauty of virtue, and the light, and sweetness, of the inner character which ought to be produced somehow in us men. But something else is true; two other things at least are true; and so true that if the whole record of human history could be searched, and the annals of every life laid bare, nothing could be found to contradict either: nay, moreover, so

true, that looking at the world as it now is, and reasonably conjecturing what it shall be, not the least vestige of a probability remains that these two facts will alter within any appreciable historic time. Sound utterances, unheard at that death-bed, are, notwithstanding, now ringing in the ears and hearts of all men ; one truth especially which is embodied in all religions, which has been dreamed of, prefigured, foretold, believed, always and everywhere. One clear line of thought divides instantly and irrevocably between those "little systems" which may justly be called "ours," and another system wherein God still holds fast the world and saves man from merited destruction. Not by the fancy and the imagination, but by the wants of nature and the past and present history of suffering men, two lessons are forced on the mind ; two facts are disclosed, one within us, and one outside. God puts the first fact to the conscience, asking us to say if it be not true. He puts the second to the faith, asking us, who have admitted the former, how we can do without the latter ? Of those facts, the first, whereof we are ourselves the best witnesses, is this: that there is none righteous, no, not one. The second, whereof God is a witness, is that what man cannot do for himself, may be done for him, and has actually been done for him by a higher power and in a marvellous way.

Now of the first fact : every humble and conscientious man must admit it. The higher the moral and spiritual

ideal, the farther will an honest man seem to himself to fall short of it. He who should boast of his own virtues and trumpet his own merit abroad, will be marked by the finger of general contempt and set down for the blind Pharisee which he shows himself to be. In the scene I described, both men admitted the fact. The dying man knew that he had thrown his life away. The survivor knew it as well, and had no comfort to give.

But the second fact, that after a man has failed, in the natural order of his course, God can help him, out of the treasures which are above nature, was that which neither of them saw. No doubt the dying felt after that truth, as one groping in shadows, and longed to hear it: no doubt his friend would have declared it, had he dared to do so. We shall see, by-and-by, why he dared not. Let us know, first, what the one might have said if his mind had been the mind of God, and what the other would have heard, had a true priest been near to bring help, not of himself, but direct from above.

“You are dying, as you have lived; weak, poor, blind, naked. You are but a specimen of an innumerable multitude. Who, indeed, lives as he ought to live in view of eternity? Who dare say, I am simple, pure, innocent, and therefore safe? Your sin possesses you. It has possessed all that went before us; it possesses and shall possess, those now here, and all that are to come. You and I are helpless sinners; and the wages of sin is death. Nature fails here: she can do no more. But

natural laws are supplemented by a supernatural one. An event occurred here on earth, long ago, yet as but yesterday, which has to do with you. An act was done, in time, which had eternal efficiency and power. Sin is the transgression of the law. Sacrifice can put away sin. All nations have believed this, and have tried means to avail themselves of it. For you it is too late. It is always too late for us, so many are our sins. Yet is there a sacrifice to which even you may yet recur. It was made, for all. It was made, because man cannot make one sufficient for himself. It is full, it is perfect, it is sufficient. There is a hope for you there. You may, at least, ask to shelter yourself in it. Perchance, through God's mercy, it may yet save even you. It is the sacrifice of the death of Jesus Christ."

Dear brethren, the story which has been told you this morning was not made up. As to what was said, and what was not said, it is substantially true. Now, let me ask your most careful attention to a question on this strange case. Why did they leave out, in that dreary final interview, the cardinal truth of the sacrifice that putteth away the sin of the world? That is the point which I have been coming to from the beginning. It is of instant importance that we know why. And the reason is simply this: that the man who should have been the other's helper and comforter had been going through a process only too common in these days. He had been falling away from the old gospel and taking up with

another thing in its place. As men say, his views had been growing broader and more liberal; and while attaining that breadth and liberality, he had been losing, meanwhile, his hold on the power of God and the wisdom of God.

It is the delirium of modern thought, that somehow or other man must be sufficient to himself, and that his entire interests and hopes centre in effort made in his natural strength. Men think that they ought to be able, not, as the apostle says, to give a reason for the faith that is in them, but to give a rational explanation of the objects of faith and of everything pertaining to religion. And strong, it should seem, above all other sentiments, is their dread of admitting anything strange and unaccountable, anything mysterious, anything which mocks the attempt to investigate or analyze, anything above natural processes and higher than natural causes, into their religious conceptions. That dread grows, if indulged. At first it makes itself apparent in some small thing. Its denials are few and timid. Some one miracle of Christ; some one verse or two of the Old Testament, gives trouble. But the trouble grows; and one thing after another proves irksome and oppressive. The inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is questionable as to its nature and extent. The sacraments of the Church have, surely, no mysterious power. The laying on of hands in ordination is but a reverent ceremony. The Apostolic succession cannot be proved. The priest cannot absolve from sin. The

preacher would be too bold to cry, "Thus saith the Lord;" his modest utterance should be, "Brethren, my opinion is thus and thus." So it goes; and so inevitably they reach, in their negations, the one last hope of man, the cross. I suppose that dread of the supernatural, that horror of mysteries, must have been what paralyzed the tongue of the lapsed priest. Poor wretch! the difficulty with him was to understand how the pain and sorrow of one should be able to help another out of misery; how the obedience of Christ could atone for the disobedience of Adam; what rational connection there can be between a death on a cross two thousand years ago and the state and prospect of a dying soul to-day. Atonement, expiation, substitution; a vicarious sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty, the just for the unjust; an infinite value, an infinite merit, applicable, while the world lasts, to our demerits and our innumerable sins; these he found to be distracting terms, more than his wit could grasp. And yet he must keep Christ, in some shape or other; and so he had tried to save his reverence for Christ, while repudiating what Christ did for him. Taking counsel of his own alarms, lest something too hard should be asked of his faith, he had ended in losing the deep things of God.

Now this is the point on which I wish to fix your thoughts; to show you whither the spirit leads which praises men for breadth and liberality of view, and not for strict fidelity to God's message and loyalty to God's truth. Little by little, in that appetite for human praise

on the score of our conformity to the opinions of men, all relish for the Gospel is lost. Nothing is spared that God has revealed to us; nothing can be spared. My illustration, taken from the life, shows that the doctrine of the Cross will be dealt with like all the rest. If any insist on a rational explanation of Baptism, it sinks to a mere ceremony of dedication. If he insist on a rational explanation of Confirmation, it sinks to a mere public confession of Christ and assuming of obligations in the Church. If he insist on a rational explanation of the Lord's Supper, it becomes a mere memorial feast. Little by little the mystery, the hidden grace, the divine power are drained out, that the reason may handle and investigate the barren husk which remains. But disloyalty to the wonder-working God, the challenger of faith in these His holy ordinances, leads ultimately to the last of all sins, denial of the power of the Cross. For if any demand a rational explanation of the sacrifice of death of Christ, none can he find; and so he ends in failing to grasp it as the vicarious act that it was, as the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sin of man; and that is to be turned back into outer darkness and left without a Saviour and without a High Priest.

Remember this, dear brethren. There is nothing in our religion, from first to last, but runs back through this visible order and strikes its roots into the supernatural realm. And far, infinitely far above the grasp of the

human reason is that mystery wrought on Calvary. It stands among mysteries, in the same place with the Incarnation and the Resurrection. Just as far above your reach as any miracle or mystery of the Scriptures, is that miracle of the salvation of a sinful man through the precious blood. As such it has been, as such it will be, presented to men in their extremity; and most unhappy, above all thought, is he who dare not tell that truth to us when we need it, or he of us, who having heard it, dare not lay hold on it to the health of his soul. Woe worth the day, when men, restrained by their superstitious fear of the vaunted wisdom of the world, cease to preach Christ crucified, and to offer pardon even at the eleventh hour through the Precious Blood. God forbid that these words should be misunderstood; that they should be taken as an encouragement to put off repentance and lead unworthy and miserable lives in hope of a late plenary absolution, deliberately expected while yet a man continues in his sins. The course of our salvation is a mystery, strange, manysided, having connection no doubt with salutary work to be done beyond the veil of this world. I should not dream of exhausting a theme so vast in one sermon. But I meant to show you this one thing, to impress on you this one point: that the end of rationalizing on religious subjects and following the variable thoughts and views of men instead of sticking fast to God's Word as witnessed to by the Church, must be, and is, to turn men coldly away from

all mysteries, and so to rob them of the comfortable doctrine of atonement for sin through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Think of your salvation as the wonder of wonders ; know that it is through Jesus Christ and Him crucified ; hold against every gainsayer, that the work *is* full, that it *is* sufficient ; so full, so sufficient, that God will know what to do, even though the eye be that of the dying, which turns then, and only then, in faith to the Cross. Either here or beyond God will know what to do, and do what can be done. So believe, and so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved, and rejoice that our Mother the Church teaches us, in this matter, so very clearly, so very plainly, that none can help understanding what she says : that it is she who with a voice ever sweet and ever fresh and young, which changes not from generation to generation, keeps saying to us and to all, “ *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.* ”

SERMON VIII.

WALKING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.

EXODUS XIII. 17, 18.

“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.”

THERE are forty years in the history of this world, which have served, since the day they ended, as a type and symbol of the trials and dangers which beset the Christian Life. In every subsequent age, men have read the story of what then occurred, with the feeling of one who seeth his natural face in a glass, and not the outward features only but the experiences of the soul. They were the years of the wandering in the wilderness, after Israel came out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from among the strange people. The tract over which they journeyed lay between a starting point and an ending; the going out was from Rameses in the land of the Pharaohs, the coming in was along the palm-fringed coasts of Canaan. And the movement had a special meaning and object, which are suggested in the text.

Let us begin by considering the geographical conditions.

Canaan, the place of their destination, lay northward and eastward from Egypt; and the line of march, from Rameses to Gaza was short, not more than a ten-days' journey. So that was near: but God led them not that way. East, and south-east, quite out of the direct route, were wildernesses, vast and desolate regions; one forming a great delta between gulfs of salt water, and dominated by the gray and barren peak of Mount Sinai, the other lying westward of the upper waters of the Red Sea. Towards those regions were their feet turned, not by Moses, but by God's command. That was a way which no general would have chosen; no good strategist aiming at an invasion of Canaan, which was already within easy reach and striking distance of his forces, would have turned about and marched away, almost in the opposite direction, into a lonely and uninhabited waste, wherein was neither water nor forage. Skeptical criticism has assailed the leader of Israel for this obvious blunder, but the answer is that it was not the doing of man, but of God; and that God did what man would not have done, because His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts. For one who believes, as we all should believe, in God's providence, the answer is more than sufficient; not only does it give the explanation which we seek; it awakens interest and stimulates inquiry. Why should that strange thing have been done? We read the answer by the light afforded by the text.

There was a moral and spiritual meaning in the whole movement.

The children of Israel were not the children of this world: they were God's own, an elect and peculiar people. They had suffered bitter things in their bondage; the time of deliverance had come; and the place looked forward to, was that of their final and delightful rest. But the attainment of the boon desired and longed for was to be neither swift nor easy. A great battle must be fought somewhere on the line, with danger of being overcome by the enemy. For that they must be prepared: they could be prepared only by long and hard discipline. They were not yet ready to do great things. Had they met the Philistines then, they would have been taken at a disadvantage, and defeated; and the next thought would have been to retreat.

Egypt, as yet, was not far away; a few steps backward, and they would have been once more in sight of the pyramids, the obelisks, the painted columns and halls, and among the melon gardens and the old luxuries, even though in slavery again. Now that temptation, that wish to return to the old places, the old misery, the old sins, must be outgrown; it must die from the heart; the strength which they needed was to be born of the loss of any and all further love or care for Egypt, and a complete absorption in a different line of thoughts. Therefore it was that God led them not the near way, but the long way round; and on that long

march, full of trials, amid fiery serpents, scorpions, and drought, through rough places, and under burning suns and heavy and flaming skies, where the fields did yield no meat and they must have perished but for the bread from the clouds, their manna-food, great thoughts came into the heart of the nation, great courage into its soul; so that when at last they met the warlike tribes of Canaan, it was as men tried in the fire, baptized in blood, hardened by the strokes of adversity, and rendered invincible by sheer contempt of life. Before such soldiers of God, so disciplined in His service, the enemy faded away, as people have done elsewhere since those times, before the invasion of veteran troops who came upon them with the schooling of years and years of war.

Let us next try to apply this, so far as the circumstances of the case permit, to the Christian's experience in his religious life. That life must have had, somewhere, a conscious beginning. I say a conscious one, because its actual beginning precedes our knowledge of the fact. Our Christian life really began, through God's grace, in our baptism, wherein we were made, though unconscious of the blessed truth, the children of God. But to know what then was done for us; to know that we have been made and are alive unto God, to perceive what we are and whose we are, this is like a second beginning. This new beginning is made, ordinarily, at the time of confirmation and first communion: then the Christian's conscious life

begins. Those sacred rites of the Church may, indeed, be received with little or no appreciation of their moral and spiritual meaning, and as a matter of course, with which it is in order to comply : but if not,—if when you were confirmed and made your first communion, you were really in earnest, and knew what you were about, and did what you did in love and sincerity,—then first you felt yourself to be a Christian, and for the first time saw yourself to be on the march towards the Celestial City. Now how, by what route, or what line, was your journey to be made ? I say at once and emphatically that its best typical picture must still be found in the forty years of wandering, with what they brought by way of trial, and proof, and weaning from the love of this present world ; and that without such steady, quiet discipline, the work runs the risk of being brought to naught.

For persons recently awakened to sober reflection on their state, and newly brought to Christ, should not be thought of as able, competent, and strong. Jacob's descendants were debased and enfeebled by long dwelling in the land of idols : they were unable to cope with the Philistines, who, had they met them, might easily have put them to flight. It is so with our neophytes, our young in the Christian life, our babes in Christ. They are not yet veterans ; they are not yet fairly drilled reserves ; they are but raw and awkward recruits. It must be so, unless in rare instances, as when, in some sweet, holy child one sees the certain making of a saint. To be-

gin with, these novices are very weak. If they make their profession of Christ at a very early age, and ere yet they have left the secure protection of a holy family and a religious household, then their weakness is that of a fallen nature which has not been tried by severe temptations from outside. If, on the other hand, they make their open profession of the faith at a later date of life, then, in addition to that congenital weakness, they have what comes of loss of time, delay without sufficient cause, and commerce with the world and some past relish for the paths of sin. Either way, this new recruit is weak, and liable to fall. Now suppose such an one brought face to face with the Philistines, with a race that know not God, with Goliath and the other giants, with the vast and splendid array of the notable enemies of the Church, with the temptations and trials of this world. Such an encounter can hardly, by any possibility, be avoided. The world is become one great Philistine camp. Strong races, hardened against religion, hold its chief places. Goliath and his brethren, big and threatening, march up and down, day after day, with boasts, defying the armies of the Lord and challenging poor little David to the battle. What is likely to result when our young Christian falls on such terrible appearances and is called on to surrender? Here surely is work for veterans and champions; but he is no champion, and as yet has hardly proved his arms. There is danger of discouragement, of terror, of flight. And Egypt calls to him to come back, fair to the eye,

sweet to the taste, with many allurements, and a bondage which many find agreeable, as if one were bound in fetters of silk, or chains of gold. Yes, the danger, if one were to go right on, by the way that is near, would be that of losing heart under the first fire, and wishing one's self out of the battle; and taking back, or at the least forgetting, the promise he had made, and sinking down, a backslider from Christ. What he wants is hardening, proving, tempering. But that comes in the round-about way. It is effected by means of the discipline of long and slow-moving years, it is the result of innumerable trials and temptations, the fruit of many painful incidents. Saint James bids us count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. Why? Because they constitute the precious discipline of life; if we fail not, we shall be purified thereby and made ready for the great and final conflict in our own valley of decision.

Who are the witnesses to the truth of this view of the Christian's conscious life in his Saviour? Who, but they that have come through it? Of these things, the novice as yet knows little. You, who but a short time ago, began to lead a new life, on you, perhaps, even to this hour, hath not dawned the meaning of what you did, nor as yet do you know what is before you. But O! for the frank testimony of those now here, who date their Confirmation and First Communion many years back, and can see how strangely their Lord has been leading them since that new beginning. You are thinking of the slow

and painful journey of the children of Israel through that great and terrible wilderness ; of Marah, where the waters were bitter ; of the region between Elim and Sinai, where they felt hunger and wished themselves back among the flesh-pots of Egypt ; of Massah, where they strove with their spiritual fathers, and found all manner of fault with everything ; of Rephidim, where they tried their hand at fighting enemies in their own way, and were helpless save when Moses' hands were lifted up in prayer for them ; of the path beside Edom, where the fiery serpents bit them ;—on these things you reflect ; and meanwhile we can see, in your look, in the lines on your faces, and in the manner which is become characteristic of you, that all these things have happened to you again in your own journey, and that you understand the history as if you had been with them in that distant time. You also have tasted the bitter waters, in some cup which your God has mingled and held out for you to drink ; in some humiliation, loss, wrong, very hard to bear :—you have gone a-hungred and a-thirst in the midst of disappointing pleasures which once you preferred to the bread of heaven ;—and even that bread of heaven has sometimes proved unpalatable to you, so that you have almost wished you had never given up the right to eat of the other : you have revolted from your spiritual fathers, and complained of the hardness of the ways of religion ; you have blistered your feet with walking in rough places, and have watched companions falling on

the road. Then again you have rejoiced for the pillar of the cloud by day, and the fire by night, the signs of God's Presence in prosperity and in adversity; you have grown at length to love the discipline and to know that it was good for you, and to love that steady walking on and on in the path of known duty, without concern about what the children of this world may think or say. You know that each year has set you forward somewhat, though you have been so restless, so impatient, so prone to murmur and complain; you know that you now love the old Egypt no more, that you could not possibly go back to it, that you would feel, there, like one out of place and far from home; for indeed this very zone of trials and tribulations, is actually become to you a sweet abode; sweet, because you feel that God is near you, and that you are led there of Him. To this are you actually come; it is the result of leading you by a long and round-about way, in which you were shown many a wonder of which you never dreamed, and taught a lesson beyond all price. And this you might have missed, had God not dealt with you in that very trying way; you might never have come to anything at all in His Church, had He allowed you to have your own way; the land you once left, or thought you had left, might again have shut you in, and your name, though graven on some disintegrating shaft by the dull river of the land of idols, might have been meanwhile blotted out of the Book of Life.

And now, come, ye proved soldiers in the army of

Christ, and tell these younger brethren, these mere beginners, what is before them, lest they deceive themselves and think to win the Crown while sedulously avoiding the Cross. Let them remember that there is no short and easy entrance into the Celestial Country ; that there is no such thing as getting into it at all without a battle deserving the name ; and that they cannot win in that fight until they have been thoroughly armed, equipped and disciplined. They will probably ask you several questions about these things ; three at least are natural and in order : Why must this be ? When does it end ? And what if a man will not submit ? Tell them the plain truth on each of those points : tell them why Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, does not lead us direct from Rameses to Gaza, though that is near, and why He turns us off in another direction and bids us measure the distances between the hard mountains and the angry sea. Why must it be ? Simply because there is no other way of forming a habit of moral strength. So long as you dally just outside the gates of Pharaoh's court, so long as you cast longing eyes backward, you will never make a soldier. You need strength, above all else ; moral strength, spiritual strength ; the strength to say, No, the strength to renounce, to bear in patience, to deny yourself what you like best ; you cannot gain that strength in a day ; it will come to you, if ever, through submission to the known will of God. That is the reason why this must be. And next they

ask, When shall it end? Tell them, that there is no end to it in this world. For the journey is the life, this mortal life. It ends when we reach the borders of the promised land, when we see the palm trees, images of victory and rest, so near that we can count their leaves; but that will be when all that is behind us is fast fading away. This is a life-long march; and if any one hath entered on it thinking of it as a child would think of a holiday excursion, it were better for him that he had never undertaken it; for he that putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of God.

And then, if they say, finally, that they cannot bear it, and would rather not undertake such a journey at all, tell them, with tenderness and yet with decision, that they cannot escape hardship and trial by declining the Christian life. God may indeed require His dear children to walk through trials and troubles; but these are no worse than what they must have borne sooner or later had they refused to leave the old places and preferred to have their portion in this evil world; nay, to walk with God near us, and the bright pillar of fire, which is His heavenly presence, over us, is easy, compared with toiling unfriended through the ways of ungodliness, where demons leer on either hand and the mutterings of judgment are ever in the air. Do what he will, care and sorrow shall oppress man in this world; it is his highest wisdom, his sole comfort, to have God on his side, and to know that his strength is in Him. So think of this life.

Expect discipline, as a matter of course ; it must come. Improve it ; you shall reap your full reward, in a strong character, settled peace, and perfect rest at the last.

But what if there be nothing in your lives which you can compare to that ancient history on which we have been musing ? What if the attempt to identify your spiritual experience, your inner conflict and trial, with those of the men and women of that long-ago, should prove a failure ? Why then, one of two things must be true : either that you have not yet, in intention or will, left Egypt ; or else, that, if you once left it, you have actually retreated before your spiritual enemies and are gotten back thither. In either case, what a thought for you, if you value your everlasting peace ! Time is passing, years have flown ; the forty years of probation, for many of your old companions, are drawing to their end, amid presages of victory ; the armies of the Lord are marching on, Canaan is full in their view ; the soldiers of Christ, sword in hand, are looking, with grave and earnest eyes and stout hearts, to the doomed stronghold of an enemy whose forces melt away at their approach ; the feet of the priests bearing the ark of God have already touched the river bank ;

“ Part of His host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now,”

while yet you are half asleep, by the slow and sluggish Nile, a captive in the house of bondage, and in danger of

being wrapped up, like a mummy, in the cerc-cloth of an idolatrous civilization, and lowered into your perpetual tomb. Better far the wilderness, the forty years of painful toil, the weary discipline, if they shall deliver us from the bands of our sins, and bring us into the freedom of His children. Think of the glory and the joy which are in the end thereof, ye who feel the burden of the march, ye who travail and are heavy laden. Refreshed and strengthened by the sight of the coming years of plenty and prosperity, ye shall be able to invoke your days of schooling in Christ and your nights of affliction, and say,

“O nights and days of this my strangely ordered but most hopeful life, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him forever.”

SERMON IX.

FALSE WEIGHTS AND FALSE MEASURES.

ISAIAH V. 20.

“Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”

MEN find, to their cost, as years enforce the lessons of life, that in this world they are under rules and regulations which avenge themselves on him who refuses to obey. We are encompassed on every hand, not by pliable substance which yields to the touch, but by hard barriers against which bones will break and skulls will crack. Lightly though we may speak of mistakes and errors, as if their consequences were unimportant, it often happens that the mistake leads on to grave trouble, and that the error cannot be corrected without agonizing reparation. And of all possible mistakes, none are more sure to drag dire consequences after them, than those which men make who have no certain standard in good and evil, right and wrong.

No intelligent person needs to be told, that there must be measures and standards of many kinds, and that with-

out them there could be no just dealing between man and man. We must have a measure of time, a measure of distance, and a measure of value; dry measure and liquid measure; and a balance, and weights; else were there an end to the business of life. Nor can we permit variableness or uncertainty in our standards. Every yard stick must be exactly as long as every other yard stick; and every quart and gallon measure precisely equal to every other quart and gallon; and a mile must be a mile, all the country through; so that, when told of a distance, you shall know just how far it is; or when you buy so many pounds or so many yards of anything, you shall know how much you have. It would never do for each dealer to have measures and weights of his own, or for a mile to be longer in one place and shorter in another. Great would be the inconvenience and disaster in that case, and so large the room for fraud that the law makes it a crime to use a false weight or a false measure. And God Almighty made that a sin in Israel, and commanded them, under rigorous penalties, to use the same standard. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have: I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." * And it is said of God, "A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight;" and again, "A just weight and balance are the Lord's." † These are

* Levit. xix. 35, 36. Deut. xxv. 15. † Proverbs xi. 1; xvi. 11; xx. 23.

not arbitrary regulations, but the expression and outcome of an everlasting law of righteousness and truth, without which society could not be kept together. Furthermore, it is a matter which concerns not the individual alone, but those aggregates of individuals which we call nations. No nation can prosper, for example, with an unstable and fluctuating currency; the people need some standard of values which does not change and by which all business transactions shall be measured. And while, in this age, nations seek to draw nearer and nearer towards each other, and there is a movement towards the unification of the human race, an idea has taken possession of some men that they can frame a system which shall be uniform the world through, so that all people everywhere may have the same measures of length, and weight, and capacity. This may be a dream; yet it is a dream of good, and the mind does homage to the Almighty in thinking such thoughts; for we know that "in Him is no variableness," * and that His will, His law, His rule, are one.

Why then, since these things are so where the material interests of life are concerned, should they not be so, when we come to weightier things? Can it be that there is no standard in morals; no sure rule by which to measure good and evil, right and wrong? It cannot be: the thing is antecedently impossible. Sorry indeed were our plight, if that were so. You buy a

* St. James i. 17.

piece of goods ; you measure it ; you can tell certainly whether you have just measure or whether you have been cheated ; and you, and I, and all of us, will think the same way about it, and we shall agree in our conclusion. What then ? Is no certainty to be had in things of much greater moment ? Here is a character, for instance ; you are told, in advance, great things of it ; a high valuation is set on it ; you hear it said, This person is lovely, interesting, worthy ; so marked, the article comes to your hands. Is there no test here ; no way to determine whether the praise is well or ill-bestowed ; no standard by which to measure the worth of women and men ? Or a book is recommended to you ; read it, says one ; it is charming, learned, profound, wonderful. Perhaps so ; and perhaps it may be shallow, stupid, pernicious, poisonous. Is there no test of literature, no way to settle it whether a book be wholesome or unwholesome, good for you or bad for you ? And if you and I differ wholly in our estimate of a person, or a book, or a tendency, or the state of society, since we cannot both be right, is there, then, no standard by which to decide which of us is right and which is wrong ? It is antecedently impossible ; it cannot be. We may have lost our standard ; or we may have thrown it away and invented another ; or each may have made one for himself, so that we are using different rules ; this is possible. But it is *not* possible, that there should be no one unvarying standard by which to measure characters and deeds, purposes and thoughts, and

the sayings and doings of men ; and no way of distinguishing evil from good, and darkness from light, and bitter from sweet, and things that are low and bad from those which are high and sound and pure.

But though this be antecedently impossible, yet, practically, men go on as though it were not only possible, but actually the case. The fact is evident that they do not use one standard and one measure of moral actions. Not that such a thing is lacking ; no—but men seem to have no such thing in use. The fact is not new. It is as old at least as the prophet Isaiah's day : so old that the memory runneth not contrary thereto. Wide are our differences in our estimates of certain things ; we do not agree as to their quality ; we differ as to the effect they have upon us and others. All is confusion on such points, for example, as these : whether certain amusements are innocent or sinful ; whether certain books are safe or dangerous ; whether certain relations kept up between certain persons are proper or improper ; whether the tone of a certain social circle is elevating or demoralizing ; whether certain people should be encouraged and abetted, or censured and reproved. I do not refer to the total separation by which the best classes and the worst are divided, but to differences existing among those who ought, it should seem, to be of one mind. Here be God's children ; persons who have been baptized in the same font, and perchance commune at the same altar, and at least belong to the same household of faith ; and

yet they differ so widely about the simplest applications of the moral law, that it would appear as if they had no ideas in common; they differ acrimoniously, and take sides, and debate with violence, and sometimes part in anger, neither being convinced. It is strange that this should be so, and pitiable, and perilous. It is one of those evils which loudly call for a cure. It leads to another and a greater danger; for when in questions about good and evil, right and wrong, light and darkness, bitter and sweet, men do not agree, and will not agree, and cannot be made to agree, the next step is to vote the fact of their disagreement unimportant, and so to make the everlasting righteousness of God and His holy law things of little or no consequence to us. Take, for instance, the divisions of Christendom. Here is a monstrous evil; a condition of affairs denounced by apostles and damaging to religion; and yet men, blunted in their spiritual sense by long familiarity with it, pronounce it a blessing. What they cannot help, they are obliged to tolerate; from tolerating, they go on to palliating and excusing; from that they proceed to admire and approve of what is nothing less than the scandal of the Christian world. Now the spheres of theology and morals touch each other; a principle admitted in the former will soon be laid down as true in the latter. It is easy, or rather inevitable, for men who hold that differences about doctrine, discipline, and worship are of no consequence, to grow equally lax in their thoughts about the moral law.

And thus they find themselves in the plight referred to. 1st, they do not agree as to their moral standard, and, 2dly, they deem the fact of their disagreement unimportant. This is a dangerous state; it is also a pitiable one. It cannot be the state in which God meant us to live. Who could endure to be told that while we have means of protecting ourselves from injustice and wrong when we go to buy a yard of cloth, or a spool of thread, or aught that we need for common household use, the mint, anise, and cummin of trivial concern, we are helpless and ignorant and without any rule when it comes to the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and truth; to those things on which depend the clearness of the intellect and the safety of the soul; to those deeds for which God will some day call us into judgment?

Nay, my brethren, of this be sure; that, whether we use it or not, there is a moral standard, a measure of right and wrong, of good and evil: and that in this respect Almighty God has not left us in the chaotic condition in which some pretend that we are. Antecedently it is impossible that we should be without such a measure; actually we have it; and if any do not see it, the reason is that they do not look for it where it is.

That standard of right and wrong is in the bosom of God. He is Eternal Justice and Truth; He is Good, He is Light, He is Sweetness, Purity and Health, and all in us needs mending, rectifying, cleansing, and healing,

that accords not with Him. And then, that men may know how to discern evil from good, and bitter from sweet, and darkness from light, the Lord has given them, as it were, a scale, and a rule, and a measure, by which to test thoughts, words, and deeds, those of other men, and their own. That is what we call the Moral Law. It was reduced to ten short precepts or commands ; and in that form imposed on the Children of Israel, from the summit of Mount Sinai ; and thenceforward it was as “ a lantern unto their feet and a light unto their paths.” And when God became incarnate, and dwelt among us, He gave us that old code again, but with comments of His own which made it possible to measure more exactly by it. The old rule was, as it were, divided into feet and inches : but Christ subdivided the inches, and gave us eighths and sixteenths of inches, so that we can make much closer tests. For instance, the Old Law gave a broad statute against murder ; but the New Lawgiver made it to include the anger which leads up to murder : the Old Law forbade adultery ; but Christ made it include all that tends that way, such as irregular passion, and intimacies between persons who have no right to be intimate or even to seek each other’s admiration ; so that we can measure not only covert acts, but the very secrets of the heart, and check criminality in its beginnings. This is the measure of right and wrong ; the holy law, the ancient commands, given by Moses, enforced by Jesus Christ ; and so long as we have

these, let no one pretend that we are without a way to judge of thoughts, words, and deeds, of books and papers, of the proceedings of certain classes of society, of traits of character, and the men and women who pass and repass us on the highway of life.

I shall not argue this proposition ; because the choice is merely between that standard and none. A variable measure is essentially defective. To pretend that each of us should make and use a measure to suit himself, would be equivalent to saying that there shall be practically none at all, and that the measure of right and wrong shall be the self-will of each party interested. But there cannot be found, anywhere, a standard which is uniform and ever the same, unless we take that which God gave us. Our choice is between the Decalogue of Israel, as expanded in the Christian Dispensation, and absolute license and indifference : order is on the one side ; chaos on the other.

If this be so,—and I see not how it can be denied by any one who believes in God as Maker and Governor of the world,—then the cause of the trouble which has been referred to is seen at once. Men do not use that old measure ; for divers reasons, they throw it aside, and set to making new measures and new weights for themselves. They take, as their rule, what they call the laws of nature, or the requirements of the age, or the necessities of modern society, or the pretended knowledge of our time ; any widely accepted maxim, they also accept ; and thus,

almost without knowing it, they surrender their judgment to false teachers, they rashly take up with some theory about sin, and righteousness, and future conditions of humanity ; and thereupon they make some tests of their own to gauge the height and depth, the length and breadth of movements, tendencies, forces, whose influence they feel. And so, the old rule is laid aside, and used no longer. Perhaps it remains enshrined with apparent respect, as something venerable and sacred, in some niche up overhead and out of sight ; but down below, there are new measures, a new ephah, and a new hin. A great writer says, that Christians have the Bible in their houses, and in their hands, and in their ears, in these days, but not in their hearts. That is the real trouble. The Word of God, the Law of God, is before their eyes, and behind, and in front, and above, and below, and everywhere excepting in the one place where it should be, in their hearts. And so, not holding fast the one rule, we differ as we do ; and a book which one thinks wholesome another regards as pernicious ; and an act seems right to one man and wrong to another ; and a path is taken by one as safe and clear, which to another seems a mere break-neck gully ; and an intimacy is formed and kept up which, though full of danger, to my view, seems to you to be innocent and angelically pure : and the trouble is, that we will insist on using our own measure in these cases, and never can agree to throw away this crooked and notched and nicked rule of our own, and set

to everything about us the line and the square provided for our use by God's own hand, and evermore and absolutely straight and true.

To understand one's error is, with an ingenuous mind, the first step towards reform. They must get back on the old platform whose consciences accuse them of having left it. We insist (and we ought to insist, as a Church), in these days of loose ideas, that there is one rule and one standard of moral action, and that men can use it if they will. Of course we all know, that it is often difficult to apply that rule ; but those difficulties are trifling compared with the confusion that results from having no rule at all. The strength of our position is to insist, that certain things are always right or wrong ; that it is *always* wrong and *never* right, to forget God, and deny Him, to deprave the Holy Scriptures, desecrate the Lord's Day, and blaspheme the Name of the Almighty ; that it is always wrong, and never can be right, to show disrespect to parents, to harbor revenge and brood over anger ; to form attachments which religion cannot bless, to hurt our neighbor in goods or fair fame, to covet the pleasures of the world, and to make one's own self the supreme object of thought. And we insist that the measure of men and women, whether they be actual or ideal, such as we meet them, in the home and in society, or such as they are presented to us by novelists in fiction, is the everlasting and unchanging law of God, and that they who do not stand that test ought not to be admired,

applauded or imitated. It can never be right to do, or say, or think what cannot stand the test of the Ten Commandments as Jesus Christ our Lord expounded them. And if there be one thing most necessary it is this: that boys and girls should be taught what the rule of morals is and how to use it. There is, perhaps, no one thing so hard to do, or worth so much when done, as this: to give to a young man or a young woman about to enter the world an instrument whereby to measure it and those to be met there; some sufficient means of detecting the falsehoods and frauds, the impostures and cheats, with which the world prepares to blunt the moral sense by deceiving the judgment: so to train them that when they see a bad thing they shall know that it is bad, and that they shall not be misled, no matter who tells them that darkness is light, and bitter is sweet, and evil is good. It is terrible to think how many go out from their homes, with no such safeguards, nor any ability to test and prove the world. Defenceless they plunge into these waves which on all sides foam out their own shame, and in an instant they are swept off their feet, and thrown into the vortex where the shrill cries of Satan and his crew dominate every other sound. Call not that kind of training education, which developes all the powers except the moral, which cultivates the intellect but not the soul, which polishes, refines, and decks with every art and accomplishment, but leaves the youth at the mercy of those who go up and down like roaring

lions seeking fresh objects of amusement, fresh companions for unseemly pleasure, fresh instruments on which to try their arts. This is not education; it is but the dressing up and preparation of victims for a cannibal feast.

“Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.” Mark the threatening sound of these words; and be sure there is a cause for the warning they convey. Once corrupt the moral sense, and the whole nature is corrupted. It is hopelessly corrupted, when the power of judging aright is gone. A man who cannot see that black is black, and vile is vile, and false is false, has eyes without eyeballs. It becomes such a one to turn to God, as well as he can, and cry aloud to Him, as the blind used to do when Jesus passed by, and to say, “Lord, that I may receive my sight!” The most dreadful of all visitations is the blindness of one who thinks that to be good and profitable which Almighty God has condemned. Let us pray for the grace to see the same way, and think alike, on subjects where the honor, the dignity, and the sacredness of our life are concerned. What is needed now is greater unity among Christians as to things essential; to have one faith, and one healthful estimate of manners and customs, and a public conscience that responds to the utterances of the Holy Ghost. It may go hard with some of us to unlearn our own knowledge, and to give up views which we have long held, not perceiving that they were

fallacious: but do not make it harder for such persons than it is. Above all, do not talk to them as if it were your view, your theory, your idea, that you are urging them to accept; but take in your hand the simple law of that God who is over us all, and having first corrected your own mistakes by it, go to your brother and show him that what you would have him accept is not a narrow system of your own, but a sublime and divine rule which should constrain us all alike. The surrenders which God demands are not surrenders to one another but surrenders to Him. In these there is no bitterness, but comfort, rest, and peace. Some sacrifices we must make to show ourselves meet for the portion with the blessed: what sacrifice more acceptable than that of a soul which renounces its own ideas, and yields itself to be guided in all things by the higher wisdom and the deeper inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Come, let us join hands together in an earnest purpose, to try and see alike one certain truth, and to strive to keep, side by side, one straight and perfect way.

SERMON X.

SHRINKING FROM THE CALL OF CHRIST.

ST. LUKE V. 8.

“ When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

TO understand the action and the words of Simon Peter, we must know what it was that he saw. The place was the shore of the Lake of Galilee : and the time was early in the first year of the ministry of Christ. Already men were talking of the great prophet, and wondering who and what He was : and no doubt the fishermen had thought and spoken much of Him. One day Christ came ; He went straight to Simon’s ship, and from it He taught the people, while Simon Peter listened. And then followed that great wonder of the miraculous draught of fishes, which astounded all beholders. That was what Peter saw. But he saw more : he saw, in all this, what was like a call to him ; not yet a direct one, but one which he could not help but understand. When you see a grand action, it is a call to you to imitate it ; when you hear of a noble deed, it is a call to you to correct whatever of littleness or meanness may be in your own soul ;

when you see others walking with God, it is a call to you to join them, and so walk even as they. Sympathetic natures need no explanation at such times; they take in at once the meaning of the voices which they hear as they go on through life. Simon Peter felt what he saw; he felt how it bore on him; and feeling it, instantly and profoundly, his first motion was to draw back in alarm, and to pray the Lord to depart from him.

Does this remind you of another scene? It must, if you are thoughtful, and accustomed to interpret scripture by scripture. It was the very thing that the Gadarenes and Gergesenes did, when Christ revealed Himself to them in His holiness, and manifested forth His glory. Compare the narratives; * they run almost exactly parallel. The place was the same, the Lake of Gennesaret or its immediate shores. The main personage in each scene is the same, Christ, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. The state of preparation in human minds is the same; the Gadarenes had heard of Christ, and so had Peter. The time was the same; just after a startling miracle. The act in each case was the same, nay the very words are the same: the people of Gadara prayed Him that He would depart out of their coasts; and Simon Peter cried, "Depart from me, O Lord." But yet, notwithstanding all these correspondences, in time, in place, in deed, in result, in word, there was a difference which outweighs all agreement. Not farther asunder are the poles

* St. Luke viii. 26-37.

of this globe, not wider apart are east and west, than were the spirit of the men of Gadara and the soul of Simon Peter. Nor could the final results have been more diverse. The men of Gadara never saw Christ again; Peter never left Him. They kept all they had and lost the Lord: he kept the Lord, and lost all else. And then the histories diverge, as streams part, never again to be united, but to flow farther and farther away from each other. On the one hand a low, material, worldly life drags sluggishly forward, passing into darkness and silence, and descending into shame and everlasting contempt: while the other, fixed on Jesus, and developed in Him, groweth more and more unto the perfect day; the name becomes an immortal name, the man is numbered with the saints in glory everlasting, and the very record of his life tells with tremendous moral force, even down to this far-off day, and here in this remote land, and is helpful, and precious, and stands like a tower of strength amidst the waves of this troublesome world.

It is well for us to analyze this history; it is especially their part to study it, who have a step to take which they have not yet taken. Is there one among us, who, called of Christ, draws back, because he feels himself to be a sinner? One whom a sense of his personal unworthiness detains from the open profession of his Saviour, from Church privileges and Church communion? Is there one who, when invited by the inner, pleading voice to rise and come frankly to the Master, has said,

almost precisely in Peter's words, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord?" Let such a one think, with awe, how like he is to Peter, as Peter was once; let him reflect what was probably in Simon's mind when he so spake; let him force his own conscience to tell him what he means, in using Simon Peter's very phrase; and let him observe what encouragement, what hope, what promise are here, to lead him to follow the saint in his final act, as he follows him now in his reluctance and hesitation.

Now, first, observe, that when our Lord came to the Gadarenes, and to the fishermen of Galilee, He came to men not yet fully informed about Him. It was not with them, as with His well-taught children; they knew not the mystery of His nature, nor the blessedness of perfect union with Him. They had all that to learn; and whether they should ever learn it depended on the question of what mould they were. Christ approached: they were aware of that fact, although they had not yet gone to Him nor given themselves to Him. What then did they see? What did they hear? What is that which rises before the soul of man, striving to draw slowly forward, till he finds his joy and rest in the Lord? What was that which rose upon the view of the men of Gadara, as they looked toward the coast and saw it advancing? What was that which rose upon the view of Peter, as he beheld the great draught of fishes and looked on the man who had done that thing? What is

that which rises before your own soul, first, as you feel your needs, and receive solemn lessons, you know not whence, of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; of life, death, eternity in their dread relations to our own personal state; as you watch the years moving by, and hear a voice within calling your name through the dimness of your way?

What they beheld, what all behold, in the like state, is first an image of something which man has not, the perfect righteousness, the purity, the holiness of God. It comes up, in contrast with their own unrighteousness, their unholiness, their sin. They see this, not as a vague dream, not as an abstraction; they see it realized, and realized in a human form. This is what God shows, some how or other, some time or other, to every soul that is worthy to be saved, or rather let us say, to every one, whether he act in the matter or not. A vision of perfect righteousness and holiness, not inaccessible, but close at hand; not a theory, but a fact; not in form of an angel, but in some shape that we can comprehend; righteousness, manifested in a life, and calling each one of us to a life; shaming our actual lives by contrast, inviting us to imitation, constraining, rebuking, commanding. There is an original, whereof we are but defaced copies; there is a perfect structure, beside which we are but mere wrecks; there is a truth, and here, in us, the counterfeit. Such was the vision which came shining forth through the moral and intellectual darkness

long ago, which rises full in view wherever, to the end of time, Jesus is faithfully preached to men. And then begin the differences among men: God shows His light to all; to all is it left to say whether they will rejoice in it, or whether they love the darkness better. Some do as the Gadarenes did; and some do as Simon Peter did. There are some to whom the vision of the holiness of God is shown in vain; they love it not; it draws them not; they would rather have the light of this world. God makes through the conscience that great appeal; He shows us what we know we ought to be and yet are not; and yet, by all this, we may not be moved; we may not love righteousness, nor hate iniquity; we may not desire to be what Christ was; we may not feel, in the least, the force of the arguments of the Holy Ghost; signs and wonders may be lost upon us. That is the end, in many a case; the man hears Christ preached, sees Him in His power in holy lives, knows that he is called of Him, and yet takes no step, nor draws near. He is precisely like the Gadarenes, who, having seen the wonders and heard the words of Jesus, prayed Him to depart, and kept on feeding their swine and leading their unblest life. He is like what Simon Peter would have been, if, after all that wonderful time on the lake, he had quietly pursued his obscure work of fishing, and had thought no more of the Great Prophet, and drifted away into the darkness that can never be lifted from the face of the godless deep. Such is the Gadarene type of

human nature, when flesh conquers spirit, and the light is quenched forever in the soul.

Let us turn to the other type of men, the type whereof St. Peter forms the illustration, when spirit conquers flesh ; and let us note what battle may be looked for.

When the holiness of God, that righteousness which all healthful souls must long for, manifested in Christ, practicable in measure, appealing to all that is noble in us, wooing by its sweetness, bidding us transform our lives, and promising in exchange for the world that peace which the world can never give : when that is once revealed to an earnest soul, why should not the man draw back ? What does it confront in him ? Weak and fallen humanity ; infirm, sinful, miserable. What is there between these two, the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of man ? Measure it not,—the space between them,—by the infinities which divide the temporal from the eternal, the creature from the Creator ; measure it not by the distance between earth and heaven ; not of that do we speak. But to bring the matter practically down to our poor selves : between the Saviour calling us to Him, and us who hear His voice there is this miserable barrier, the barrier of our own infirmity ; a barrier of blindness, frailty, indecision, fearfulness ; the love of this present world, the dread of sacrifice, the natural preference for an earthly life. That is the barrier between us and the Lord our Righteousness ; and it is from that side, from this our fallen and ruined

humanity, that the cry goes forth, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" It is natural that men should utter that cry, that they should draw back at first; as a blind man, suddenly finding the use of his eyes, would shrink from the light with a sense of pain; as a prisoner, suddenly released, might be at a loss where to go or what to do. That is the thing which the souls that are to be saved through Christ feel and overcome; there they triumph; there they follow the saint, who felt his own unworthiness, and drew back, overpowered by the sense of his own sin, and yet found the way out of that snare, and never thereafter ceased to love and serve the Lord.

It has been thought by some, that Simon Peter drew back because he feared to sacrifice his boat and his nets, and to give up what little of worldly goods he may have had. It is not a full explanation of the case; it comes no where near to satisfying the mind. Such things may indeed have occurred to him; but who that reflects on history, and remembers what kind of a man he was, can doubt that there was much more in his thoughts than a low concern about the petty interests, the trivial round, of this life? Surely there were within him emotions which shake the soul, the sense of something vast and untried coming into the life; prophetic flashes from the front, disclosing what man feels himself too weak to bear. His deep cry was the expression of an inner strife, that critical strife between inclination on the one hand, and duty on

the other, wherein duty is about to prevail. His was a mighty heart, full of capabilities, destined for marvellous things in the kingdom of heaven. It was equal to all that Christ demanded ; but it was weak, also, weak with the infirmity common to all men ; it felt its unworthiness, it shuddered at the call while yet it dreamed not of refusing ; it shrank from taking a step, which it had already resolved to take. And so, the conscience-smitten man uttered, true to what he felt, the cry, " Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." And yet, so far was Peter from desiring the Lord to take his words as he spake them, that he uttered them, while falling down at Jesus' feet, and holding fast to the Lord ; with the lips, he said, " Depart," but the soul said, " I will never leave Thee nor forsake Thee ! " Such is the example which he set us ; and in that sense it is well for a man to feel that he is not worthy to come to Christ.

To you then, whosoever you are, that remain at a distance, not confessing the Lord before men because you feel yourselves unworthy to appear as His disciples and to be known as his professed followers : to you do we earnestly commend the example set you by that humblest, that grandest of men, the head of the Apostles, the first of the Twelve, the first that was called to the sorrows and the glories of the Redeemer's company. To be with Christ is, ever since, a sorrow and a glory ; He promises the crown in His kingdom, but first he presents to each the cross. Let me say no word to detract

from the grandeur and dignity of the act of confessing Jesus Christ. When an intelligent man, in the clearness of his thought, in the calmness of his purpose, and without fear of human opinion, openly declares himself to be of the company of them that stand near Jesus Christ ; he does an act, which, for dignity, none of his intelligent acts can excel. This ought not to be a formality. It must be plain, to any thinking man, that Jesus Christ, to be his Saviour in any true sense, must come right into his life as a reality, and abide there as more than a name, as a truth, as a master, as a king. He knows that a mere historical Christ would be to him no more than the picture of some dead sage ; that a Christ merely looking on him from afar, outside his life, would do no more for him than the old stone sphinx, which sits, not without a certain dread majesty and a weird religious awe, yet silent and apart, amidst the deserts of Egypt. Nor yet will any come to Christ, who look on the plan of salvation as a hard mechanical scheme, under which all is done arbitrarily for us, while we have nothing positive to do. Let us not weaken, in the least, the idea, that to come to the Lord and confess Him before men is to do a real and very solemn thing, and a thing which a man must thereafter live up to. In such case as this it is Christ who comes straight to you, in your daily life, just as He came to Simon and Andrew, to James and John, in their little fishing boats and in the midst of their trade ; to you it is as real a coming, as it was to them. It shall be so to the

end of time, while souls are called into the kingdom : it is thus with you to-day. What you are called to is the righteousness of God in Christ, the imitation of Christ. The Lord now stands before you ; he shows you in Himself what you ought to be ; He bids you arise and follow Him. Do you draw back ? That is but natural ; it was so with the men of Gadara ; it was so with St. Peter ; marvel not at that first impulse. Does the sense of your own unworthiness keep you away ? Why not ? It was so in Peter's case ; he felt that he was not good enough ; that he was unworthy, that he might not persevere if he once began : such feelings also are most natural. The strife within you is what it always has been and always will be. Your temptation is a very old one ; to be content with a lower life, to cling to this world, to walk by sight and not by faith, to surrender to your fears, to take no risk and let go the hope of the prize. When Simon Peter looked on Christ, that day he had in him two lines of thought which have often troubled you : Shall I repel this invitation, keep on with my pursuits, live as other men live and as I have always lived, be content to vegetate, spin out my feeble life, die as the multitude die, and take what may come hereafter ? Or shall I obey this strange mandate, and follow Him who speaks and acts as one from another world, and go after Him, not knowing whither or to what, and be as a stranger and a pilgrim in the world and as an alien unto my mother's children ? Such was his choice ; such is yours : and though the

sense of personal unworthiness may be oppressive to you, yet it ought not to keep you back. It is the thing we all need; the knowledge that we are sinful men is the guarantee of humility and patience, of faith and reverence. Nothing good will ever come to the man who does not feel himself, to be a sinner: spiritual pride, an assumption of merit, a feeling of self-sufficiency, these drive men off from God. The very opposites of these are what we all need to bring us to Him, and to keep us near Him; to feel that we are nothing, that we merit nothing, that we have no worth before Him; this, logically, should bring us to Christ; and where such feelings are professed, and yet men make no move forward, we can only think, either that they are insincere in their profession, and merely put forth the plea of unworthiness as a mask for unwillingness, or else that their thoughts are in total confusion about the conditions of the sinner's acceptance by the Holy Redeemer. Let them correct their error and cast out that unworthy fear, and all shall be well.

Finally, think what a wonderful life that was, which began with hesitation and a sense of great unworthiness, and even a request to the Lord to depart, and yet, in spite of that, with an embracing of Christ and a full surrender to His service. Think what came into it; the calmness, the deep wisdom, the love that casteth out fear; the joy of sacrifice, the sense of being a strength to the brethren, the triumph over death, the everlasting crown.

Blessed are all they who simply and humbly receive the Saviour and walk with Him. They learn, day by day; they enjoy even this present life as the ungodly cannot enjoy it; they feel the sweet sense of God's Hand over them: when they pray, they feel that the prayer is heard; when tempted, they know to whom to turn; others are dearer to them, because one in Christ; to the changes and chances of this mortal life they are indifferent; they rest on the promises, they are sure in that strong covenant which God, who cannot lie, hath made with their souls; they feel the presence of the Lord, and all but see His face: calmly they hold their steady course through the storms of life, serenely they gaze on the black rim of the River of Death as the feet touch it at last; the skies are clear beyond, where the sweet fields of the Canaan of our hope stand dressed in living green. Who can bear to lose all this? Who would be kept out of the blessedness of such a life, by a timidity unworthy of a man? "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is:" you shall see it all, you shall taste it all, the fulness of the life of faith, if you do as Simon Peter did, casting your fears to the winds, and believing that He who calls you to the knowledge of His grace is able to succor and sustain to the uttermost all who come to God by Him.

SERMON XI.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.

COLOSSIANS II. 14, 15.

“ Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross : and, having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

THIS day is known in the Church as Passion Sunday. The title, reminding us of the Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ, brings also to our minds an omen of victory ; for He, in His sorrow, was victorious over all His foes. The Cross, though at first an implement of torture and a sign of disgrace, now shines before the world, in royal dignity, grandest of all emblems, bespeaking triumph and a far-spreading conquest. Passion Sunday is a day whercon to rejoice, and not to despond ; and hence appears the reason for the choice of a text. Those words of Saint Paul are more than remarkable. It was said by Saint Chrysostom, that in his opinion, the apostle never expressed himself, in all his writings, more magnificently than here ; and many of us, perchance, will agree with him, when we have duly considered the meaning of the

terms. They breathe of war and victory, of that terrible Passion of the Lord, and its glorious results, of battles which might shake, not the earth only, but the heavens also ; of the everlasting conflict between Light and Darkness, and how the powers of Darkness were driven in confusion before the arm of Him who is God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God. Let us enter at once on the careful study of Saint Paul's thrilling statement, and with a kind of sacred enthusiasm let us trace the meaning as it unfolds itself to the view.

The person of whom these very excellent things are spoken is our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is declared of Him, that He blotted out a handwriting of ordinances that was against us ; that He took the said handwriting out of the way ; that He nailed it to His Cross ; that He spoiled principalities and powers, His deadly enemies ; that He triumphed over them, and made of them an open, public show. These are great things, of a truth ; they were all done by the Captain of our salvation ; let us see that we understand just what it means.

The force of the passage lies in its leading terms ; of these, three need explanation, " the Handwriting," the " Ordinances," and the " Spoiling " of the Infernal Hosts. Let us give attention to these in their order, and see how they may be, and have variously been, interpreted. I shall begin by stating a very narrow and limited view which may be taken of the passage.

It has been thought, by some, that the apostle referred

merely to the abrogation of the Jewish religion upon the introduction of Christianity. When the Gospel was preached, the law came to an end ; when the Catholic Church was formed, the old and gray-headed synagogue merged into it, and was swallowed up ; when the Great High Priest of all mankind appeared, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life," * but, like Melchizedek, abiding forever, the Levitical priesthood failed and was changed. To these familiar facts, it is thought, by some, that the apostle referred. They suppose that by the "ordinances" he meant the rules, rites, and ceremonies of the law of Moses, and by the "handwriting," their transcription in the Pentateuch. It might justly be said of the old system, that it was "against" men ; for it showed them the guilt of sin and the need of its expiation, while yet it left them uncertain how it could be taken away. And thus, according to this interpretation, Saint Paul meant, that our Lord blotted out that handwriting of ordinances that was against us, by appearing as the one whom the old Law foreshadowed ; by taking away the curse of that Law, in shedding His own blood for sin ; and by abolishing the ancient dispensation and covenant, and introducing in its place a new system, having means of grace sufficient for man, and a sure hope of glory.

All this is true, so far as it goes ; and, no doubt, it is included in the apostle's words. Yet there is nothing in such an interpretation, to justify Saint Chrysostom's

* Hebrews vii. 3.

opinion of the magnificence of the passage. We must seek for a wider sense : much more is here than a reference to the religious experiences of the Jewish people ; what is said, in holy scripture, concerning the little Israel of the former days, may very often be taken, in a larger way, of the great spiritual Israel which is to overspread and possess, some time or other, the whole habitable earth. Judæa is a small place ; a tract of land, some 300 miles long by about 100 wide ; not more. Yet think of the realms which bound it on either hand ! There are the Syrian border, the hilis of Arabia Felix, and the provinces of Asia Minor ; and behind them the mighty kingdoms of the East, fringed in the far north by perpetual snow ; the unexplored and all but illimitable regions of the South ; the waters of the Midland Ocean and the storm-beaten " Islands of the Sea." Now just as the little Judæa lay thus in the midst of the world, land-locked, and sea-locked, and hemmed in on every side, so is it with those interpretations of scripture in which men never get beyond the Jews and their affairs ; small and narrow renderings, true in their way and right in their place, but imbedded in some wider sense, wherein we find a reference to God's creatures at large, to the round world and all that is therein, to all sorts and conditions of men, to place without limit and time without end. Let us seek, on this principle, for a wider application : and, as a key to this lock, and a measure of this sublime utterance, let us have nothing less than the Venerable Cross itself ; that Cross

on which He died, not for the Jew only, but for the Gentile also ; that Cross whose height is to heaven, its depths to hell, and its breadth, right and left, to the ends of the universe.

We shall begin with what is said at the close : He spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, He triumphed over them. To spoil is to rob. The term is from the vocabulary of war. It is, to take by force, to wrest from the adversary's hand. When it is said of our Lord that He spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness, and robbed the evil spirits of their prey, the design must be to set Him before us as a conqueror, triumphant in the fruits of victory. The strong man armed may keep his house for a time, yet only till there cometh a stronger than he to bind him, to pull off that armor wherein he trusted, and to seize upon his possessions.* First, then, we behold our Lord as the spoiler of the hosts of hell. Next we gaze upon the implement wherewith He smote and scattered His foes ; it is His Cross. "In it" He triumphed ; by it, upon it, through its well-known, memorable use, as crosses are intended to be used. And then we ask the manner of that victory ; and we find our answer in the former part of the verse ; He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us ; and when that handwriting was nailed fast to His cross, the strife was over, and the victory was substantially achieved. This is the sequence of the apostle's

* St. Luke xi. 21, 22.

thoughts, which now indeed begin to unroll themselves in grandeur: Christ has invaded the dark kingdom, He has robbed its princes, He has torn from them their prey. All this was done by no other weapon but the Cross. By means of that Cross, He has removed, taken away, annulled, and cancelled some fatal bond, some dreary scripture, which was against us; and in the annulling of that death-warrant consists the substance of the triumph. We come, at once, to a question, on which the whole passage turns: What was that handwriting of ordinances, which the Lord blotted out and took away? As that question is answered rightly, the words of Saint Paul shine forth as it were in letters of fire; they sparkle, through the darkness of human life, as do the lights of an illumination, when cities and towns rejoice for peace or other blessings, and when every house and every window pane glitters with festal stars.

By the ordinance we understand to be intended a perpetual law, which from the beginning has coupled together these two things, sin and death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." * Sin and death are to each other as cause and effect. It is so; it must be so. There is nothing arbitrary in the connexion; it is necessary, and inevitable. Every man's conscience, and all our moral convictions, witness to the fact that Sin and Death are to each other as the seed to the fruit. This owes its origin, not to caprice, not to accident, but to that eternal law of

* Ezek. xviii. 4.

morals, the will of God and the justice of God. Absolutely true, even as He is true ; absolutely just, as He is just ; unalterable, unchangeable in its prime and necessary fitness, runs that ordinance, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

If this be the "ordinance," what are we to understand by the "handwriting?" The explanation is easy. It is the signature at the foot of that law ; the autograph which brings it close home to the signer, and makes him responsible for what precedes. But whose is that signature and autograph? Whose, unless our own? The ordinance is general : but when you or I shall have signed it, the fatal handwriting makes it bear on us directly. Whoever commits, though but one act of sin, does thereby place himself within the scope of the ordinance of death : this also is just and right, else were the law unjust and wrong. If it be right that death should follow on sin, then it is right that your particular sins should bring about, as their result, your death. Each man, in his own acts of sin, subscribes to the ordinance, making it his individual concern. We have all signed, therefore. Our names are there in full ; so are the names of all that ever were born into this world. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die ;" that is the premise. "Thou hast sinned, therefore thou shalt die ;" that is the conclusion. We individualize the sentence the moment we offend : the proclamation, no longer indeterminate, lays hold on us, and smites us with its terrors. By sinning, we affix our

names to the warrant of death : we say, in effect : “ What is true universally, must be true of every man. I have sinned, therefore the sentence falls also on me.”

Such is the interpretation of this passage, which is now offered to you. The “ *ordinances* ” are those unchanging and unchangeable moral principles, which we believe to be eternally in God, and in accordance with which are fixed, perpetually and inevitably, the relations between crime and punishment, guilt and retribution, sin and death. The “ *handwriting* ” is the proper act of the sinner, a subscription, done by his own hand, whereby the statute is made applicable to him. The decree is general against all them that depart from God and do evil : and whenever a man sins, he does in effect write down his name, plead guilty, and incur the stress of the sentence. Alas ! our names are there ; all of them in order. For “ we have erred and strayed from His way like lost sheep, and there is no health in us.” The law is against us also ; and upon us is directed the storm of the righteous condemnation.

Is it not time to begin to grope our way out of this darkness of the law, and sin, and death, and to look for the dawning of the light beyond ? Before we can do so, we have to look upon a scene yet darker than that on which we have been gazing. It is in connection with this ordinance of death, thus duly signed, sealed, and delivered by the dying, that our Lord is said to have “ spoiled the principalities and powers ” of the infernal

pit. How could that have been? Only, I think, in one way; and what that way was, will be manifest when we consider a subject full of mystery and full of gloom, the relations of evil spirits to those unhappy mortals whom they are perpetually striving to destroy.

We are told, in Holy Scripture, that through envy of the devil, sin and death took possession of men. It was he who procured their signatures to the statute under which they must die: it was he who brought about the application of the universal law to individual cases. If men had not been tempted by the devil, they would not have fallen. By his arts they fell; through his persuasion, induced by his representations, they placed their own handwriting to the ordinance; and ever since that day, he stands up before God and man, a witness against the sinner. The evil one is called, in Holy Scripture, the accuser of the brethren; it is said that "he accuses them before God day and night" (Rev. xii. 10). Having lured us to our ruin, he incessantly points to the fact that we are fallen and lost. He speaks as though the whole human race were to become his own property; as though he held them bound by the eternal decree; as though, having induced them to sign the ordinance, he now regarded them as forfeited, limb and life, to his power. The "handwriting of ordinances" was a kind of bond, by the force whereof the devil laid claim to all its endoisers. For him they had signed it; on his suggestion, at his solicitation, in reliance on his statements in

contradiction to those of the Lord. And therefore he will have, not merely the pound of flesh nearest the heart, but the heart itself, the blood, the life, the whole man, body and soul. He cries, "under this instrument, which I now display, this 'handwriting of ordinances,' which is against you, ye all are mine." It is the harsh, cruel voice of the Shylock of our race, demanding

"To have the due and forfeit of his bond."

He denounces us, he accuses us before the Judge, he appeals to the law, he asks for a judgment, and for the execution of the sentence.

Let us pause and consider this scene. Remember what St. Chrysostom thought, that this was the most magnificent passage in the writings of St. Paul. What a sight is presented to our view! It is that of the Lord Jesus Christ spoiling the devil and his angels, by wresting from their hands and cancelling the bond of death. Not one word have I said, drawing on the fancy or the imagination; nothing but sober, simple Gospel truth; nothing but what fairly lies in the words of Holy Evangelist and Apostle. Look then, upon the astounding scene; men grievously oppressed and sore vexed by their adversary and accuser; he, reiterating the cry for justice and sentence; the principalities and powers of darkness leagued against "the prisoners of the pit." * Out of the deep do they cry unto the Lord; we hear the

* Zech. ix. 11.

long wailing litany : *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison !* " Whereupon, while all this is in progress, One appears, whose form is like the Son of God. He draws nigh, and is with us, ere yet the doom is pronounced. At the last hour of the world, at that dark hour which fore-runs the dawn, the Redeemer stands upon the earth. He steps between the destroyer and the victims. Here is a question about a bond, a law, and an ordinance ; He demands that fatal ordinance, He takes into His hand the bond of death, He reads it through. It is in proper form, it is correct, it is signed by the unhappy, it is attested by the adversary witness. It bears the names of us all ; it is the death warrant of us all, and of all that ever lived on the earth. Yet are there suspicious things about it. This is the work of the devil ; the witness is the ancient enemy of God and man ; his motive has been malice and envy, his instrument fraud and deception. Can aught be done ? What can be done but this ? Some one shall discharge the debt for us, and prosecute to the uttermost the enemy that hath done this thing.

Here are deep, dark places in the counsels of God : we must not argue, we must not invent ; we must look where we are walking, and tread with fear. Yet what we see, we see ; and what we see, we may tell. It is Jesus on the Cross ; the Victim of the law, the Ransom for the whole debt of all the world. It was the sixth hour, when they crucified Him. " And there was darkness over all the

earth until the ninth hour." * Meanwhile, through the gloom, there flutters something white ; nailed to the cross-head, dimly seen above the crown of thorns. It is a parchment, seemingly ; and it bears a name, written in three tongues, for Jew, for Greek, for all that are afar off. Shall we trust, that the name which now is on that scroll has been put in the place of our names ? that our names have been washed out in blood most precious ? Can that be the new handwriting substituted for the old ? Can that be the old ordinance, nailed to His cross, cancelled, annulled forever ? Is that the old bond of death ? and has He driven the sharp steel through it, and made it a thing of the past ? It must be so. For He blotted out the handwriting ; how otherwise than in His own heart's blood ? He nailed it to His Cross, so taking it away. He thus spoiled principalities and powers ; how but by saving us from the jaws of the lion ? He made a show of them openly, and triumphed over them in the Cross : how otherwise than by making it the signal and the means of redemption and deliverance to all mankind ?

Human powers fail in applying themselves to such a theme as this. We are always able to see and feel more than we are capable of expressing. One hardly dares to walk in the places made altogether glorious through our Saviour's Passion : we fear, lest the imagination should play us some trick ; lest enthusiasm should make us rash and over-bold ; lest, while with the imperfect instruments

* St. Matthew xxvii. 45.

at our command, we gaze delighted and adoring on the mysteries of the faith, the pure white solar light should be, though ever so little, decomposed, and some delusive prismatic colors should fringe the edges of the field of view. Yet let us, in contemplating the Passion, remember how it lays hold of the whole intellectual and moral nature, as nothing else can; that the depths of human consciousness, how deep so ever they be, compared with those deep things of the Father and of Christ, are like the little pools left by the ebb tide in the hollow of the rocks, compared with the vast profound of the ocean, whence their shallow wavelets were derived. So, in the words which have formed the subject of this morning's reflections, we see such wonderful things as no pencil could sketch and no poetic spirit adequately describe. The mirror into which we have looked is but a little thing, not two inches square; yet how immense are the objects which it reflects! The words of the text are not so much as fifty in number, and yet consider what they contain! They tell us of that burden of sin, for which no man, no angel, could have found a remedy; of the power acquired by the Evil One over the creatures of God; of the hard bondage wherein we were made to suffer; of the breaking up of that old state of gloom and death by the glorious and triumphant work of Christ. Here flashes out, as constantly elsewhere, the now splendid figure of the Cross; and here we see the fall of the legions of the pit. It is a little poem, an epic condensed in a marvel-

lous way ; the triumph of the Lord, the rescue of His children, the prophecy and foretaste of their ultimate security when the saying shall be brought to pass, that " Death is swallowed up in victory." With joy and hope let us give ourselves, in these the latter days of the holy season of Lent, to reflections such as the apostolic statements are apt to awaken, and let us, in reposing our whole faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, say, with all confidence, as we daily say, perhaps with too little heed to the meaning of the words :

" IN TE, DOMINE, SPERAUI : NON CONFUNDAR IN
ÆTERNUM."

SERMON XII.

“THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION.”

PHILIPPIANS III. IO.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

IN an age in which some of the mightiest forces of the universe are at work in docile submission to the will of man, bent to our purpose, and doing us inestimable service, it may sound strangely to hear the Christian speak of the power of the resurrection. Ready audience is given to those who discourse of the energy put forth throughout the material world; of the power of that great first cause, whatever it be, that created and still sustains the creature; of physical sciences; and of the divers appliances whereby man, the being of a day, is able to handle, during that brief day of his, and use as his slaves, some of the very forces which did their work, or ever the earth was framed or man trod its surface. These things they understand, or at least they take in the glowing words in which the speaker handles his theme. But now let us Christian priests take the place of the popular lecturer, and let us discourse, in turn, of another power;

of the power of One who was a man like us, and died, and rose again; of a power resident in Him and going forth from Him; of a power which we call "*the power of His resurrection.*" Straightway they are confused. What is that power? What does it effect? How is it applied, and with what results? These questions they put; and having put them, some turn away, like the Athenian scoffers, mocking; and if others gather about the preacher to hear what he has to say, it is as if to listen to some new thing, and not without the thought that this is but "a babbler."* Yet some shall there ever be, who know what the world does not, who feel what the careless are insensible to, and the faithless would fain put away; and these will listen, as to the word of God which gives help. For we have always among us these classes of persons: the men who will not listen, but stop their ears; the men who will listen, but solely as critics and judges; and those who long for something to turn their darkness into light. Now let us try to speak, as the Lord hath taught us, of that mysterious power of His resurrection.

And, first, what is it?

Specifically, distinct from any other that acts anywhere in the universe. We must insist on this, or we have no case at all. It cannot be reduced to any class, or worked into any system of similar forces. It cannot be made the subject of experiment to discover what it is; it cannot be explained in scientific terms or symbols. It is a power

apart and by itself. There are physical forces ; it is not one of them. There are moral forces ; it is not one of them : working moral effects, it is not merely and simply a moral force. There are spiritual forces ; but this is more. When there was war in heaven, it was an instance of angel against angel, of spirit against spirit. When St. Michael contended with the Devil about the body of Moses,* it was spirit against spirit, the good against evil, the pure against the fallen. When the spirit of God moved upon the waters,† spiritual force went out to reduce confusion to order and to bring the earth out of chaos. None of these instances of force gives the exact analysis of the power of the resurrection. That power was a new thing in the universe : it came, with a certain event in the history of this world ; it could not have come till that event had taken place.

What then shall we say of it ? Let us speak reverently, with thoughtfulness, with awe, and yet boldly, as we ought to speak, teaching with authority, in our Master's Name, and not as the scribes of this day.

That which sets off this power from any and all others, is a historical fact. The name of Christ, of Him who was crucified in Palestine, by order of Pontius Pilate, and in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, is a true name in history. That he was born, and lived, and died, will be conceded at once ; nay more, that he died a malefactor's death, under the Roman law, and by the sentence of a

* St. Jude 9.

† Genesis i. 2.

Roman tribunal. That he rose again from the dead, and appeared on the earth alive and well, after His death and burial, is the faith of a vast body of men, inhabitants of the earth, to-day; some 300,000,000, aver that it was so. That has been the faith of other men, our predecessors, for nearly 1900 years. The faith of this great cloud of witnesses is a faith in a literal fact; that the very same Man, in His very same body, did rise again from death. We use the word "resurrection," not as dissemblers, but as honest men, who say what they mean, and mean what they say. We use it, not by way of cloak, to give an air of orthodoxy to some unreal notion of our own. In using that term, now become so sacred, that to put a false sense on it would be to speak in riddles and turn a simple genuine word into a lie, we mean to express our faith that He did truly and bodily rise from death. If any terms in any tongue are apt to convey the idea of a literal resurrection of a real body, we intend to convey the notion which such terms express. This is what we believe, of His resurrection from the state of the dead, of His return to this earth from the place of the dead, wherever that place may be. But if so, then does it follow, that He still lives. His life as risen, may now be numbered, by the same calendar, which records the centuries of the era called by his name. Christ being risen, dieth no more.

Now the power of which we are speaking is a power proceeding from that Person, so risen and so living on.

It is a power which could not have proceeded from one who had not so risen; who, once having entered into the state of the dead, had continued therein. It is a power which He could not have wielded, had His body seen corruption in the tomb, and His spirit remained a disembodied ghost. It is easier to say what that power is not, than to tell just what it is.

Let us then exclude from our description of it some popular notions. The dead have power; they exert it, and strongly, on the living. The power of a noble life is felt after that life is ended. They who have set us examples of what men ought to be, retain their influence, long after they have descended the steps of the tomb; we hold them in memory, and try to imitate them. But the power of the resurrection is not a power of that kind; it is not a spell cast on us, for our good, by the remembrance of a glorious life; it is not the ruddy light flung on our dark ways by a vision in the past. Put such weak and low conceptions of it away.

Nor is that power of the resurrection what men call a moral power, impersonal; as of an influence in the atmosphere; nor a social or intellectual determination; nor such power as the thought of one exerts over the thought of another. Virtuous maxims find a response in ingenuous souls; the conscience is advocate in their behalf. A deep affection for one removed, reveals the extent to which we were bound fast, through sympathy.

But these ideas are feeble, rudimental, childish, compared with that other force. They are swept up into it, and there absorbed and held in solution. Search the world through; you can find nothing precisely like this. Lose sight of the fact to which we have referred, and you lose, at the same time, your conception of that vast mysterious power. No one can comprehend it, who has let go his grip of the hem of the garment of that risen Son of God Most High, and has slipped and fallen prostrate on the flats, where they feel nothing stronger than moral influences, refining associations, and pious remembrance.

The power of the resurrection is something above and beyond those lesser powers, which the dead exert over the living, and men, during life time, on one another. It is a power resident in a risen personage, who has a true, recorded history. In Him dwelt, of old, "*all the fulness of the Godhead.*" That was, in eternity, and because He was the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, and of One substance with Him. But more. "*In Him,*" now, "*dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead,*" but in a new way, to wit, "*bodily.*" * Incredible as it may sound, that is the apostle's statement, and no doubt can exist that he meant what he said. The fulness of the Godhead is ever the same. That fulness now dwells in Him "*bodily;*" such indwelling commenced in time, since a

* Coloss. ii. 9.

body cannot be eternal. But the body spoken of is not that of the humiliation ; it is the body of glory, the body which rose from the dead, the body which became incorruptible, immortal, powerful. And the power of the resurrection, whatever it be, flows from that Body of glory in which the fulness of the Godhead now dwells ; its seat is in that Body of the risen Lord ; from that body as from a centre and point of departure it goes, acting after its own way, and by its own law, and having nothing similar or equal to it here or elsewhere, before its own day or thereafter.

Thus, halting, do we speak : not halting for want of faith, but for want of words to put such a truth into shape. If the men of science are sometimes at a loss to describe natural phenomena, and have to invent for that purpose words which sound strangely to the popular ear, what wonder that we should be at a loss when speaking of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ? We cannot describe : we can but attach the power of the resurrection to the historic fact of the resurrection, and rivet them together ; and, having done so, go on to say what that power effects.

On that point, our language may be more precise.

Hold fast the clue through the labyrinth which you are about to enter. We are talking about the power of a resurrection : now a resurrection implies, as its antecedent, a death.

That word, death, is at once understood ; and yet it

gives us not a simple but a complex idea. There are many kinds of death ; death of the body, and death of the mind, and death of the soul ; death of faculties, of powers, of habitual thoughts. Any one limb may die ; the intellectual powers may die ; and whatsoever makes the fulness and joy of this mortal life, may die. Faith may die, and hope ; friendship and love ; and men may die to the sense of honor and virtue, and become dead in their sins ; and finally, the love of life itself may die, so that a man would rather be dead than live on another year. Take it all through, the world is a place of death rather than of life. The *mortal*,—as he calls himself bitterly,—goes his way singing his death-song all the while from year to year, from youth to age. He is threatened, menaced ; he lives in constant terror of heart-rending loss. Vain are the powers of nature to save ; they have no specific against death. The strongest forces of the natural world, though he wield them freely, cannot save him from his enemy. As weak are moral forces, or personal influences. He may strike hand with friend and brother in vain ; he may cultivate, improve, elevate himself, never so much ; he cannot propitiate the inexorable foe. There is no stable basis to his prosperity ; everything is ready to lapse and glide away. Riches, health, friends, credit, hopes, all are ready at an instant to wing their flight. And then there is moral deterioration and spiritual decay, and a sinking down into the mire and clay of evil life. I ask, looking on the scene of change and death displayed by this present

world, what need we so much, as that force of forces, a power of resurrection ?

This indeed is what every reformer seeks, what is desired by every well-wisher of his kind ; by those who love their brethren, who have compassion on the sufferer, who long for a clearer light and a purer and happier world. No word is so familiar to us as that terrible word, death ; and the toils, the aspirations, the dreams of the anxious, the malcontent, the philanthropist, resolve themselves, at last, into the burning wish to find, if possible, for this defiled world and for man, its sorrowing tenant, a power of resurrection.

And here we meet these eager souls. We affirm that we know of that power ; of a power which is able to arrest decay, reverse the law of mortality, make all things new, give fresh life, youth, virtue, and love, and to secure these to man forever. But we say more ; we declare that the power of *a* resurrection, which is what every one needs, and must admit that he needs, is solely to be found in *the* resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We add, that they who do not perceive this, are as men groping in the dark for a path which they have lost ; we affirm, that to deny the truth and reality of His resurrection is to kill the hope of any resurrection ; that if there has been anywhere, these past two thousands years, revival, reform, with help to the poor, and light to those in darkness, and cheer for those in sorrow, it has come directly or indirectly by the power

of that resurrection which the Catholic Church confesses. Men cannot see this ; they reject and deny the fact ; and they collect their materials from the natural world, and bend darkling over their own alembics, trying to make an elixir of life, a panacea to keep off trouble and death ; no whit wiser than their prototypes of old, who lavished time and wealth on the search for the philosopher's stone, or wandered up and down in jungles and feverish everglades, hoping to discover the fountain of perpetual youth. Such fountain there is of a truth ; but it flows forth from "that spiritual rock which follows us, and that Rock is Christ."*

I know that many will not hear us when we tell them this. But if they will, another question follows. How is that power applied ? And who are they that feel it ? And why do we see so little of its effects in the world ? These also are great matters. Let me say a word or two on them before concluding.

Look at the text again. You will see that in speaking of "the power of the resurrection" the apostle adds another phrase : "the fellowship of His sufferings."

We may not divide these two. The one belongs to the other. To know the power of His resurrection, one must also know the fellowship in His sufferings. So then there is another death to die, over and above the natural death, and whatever goes with it. Christ's sufferings were summed up in His death for us sinners ; to have

* I Cor. x. 4.

fellowship in His sufferings is to die for Him, as He died for us. It is to die to the old nature, to the "old man" of our fallen and sinful estate, to self, to the flesh, with its affections and lusts. And this kind of death is, and must be, self-inflicted. Every one born into the world must endure sorrow and pain, some time or other, in the natural order of things. Those give him no fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, unless he unite them by faith to the Cross, and silently offer them to his Lord. Fellowship in Christ's sufferings there can be none, till one will that it be so.

So then, before the power we speak of can be felt or known, two things are demanded of us. First, faith in it; a faith which lays hold of that and that only, and confesses that no other power in the universe is now, or ever will be, potent against death.

And secondly, there must be "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness:" a voluntary renunciation of the corruptions which are in the world through lust, and an effort to rise again into the better life in Christ. Without these two preparations in themselves, the power of His resurrection will remain to men an unknown force, as ineffective as the Unknown God to the men of Athens. Other forces shall affect them, this will not. Other powers may work on them after their kind, this will not. There are forces and powers of a natural order; they came out of nothing, and have no promise to endure. There are laws in the natural order; they work death, or, at

least, cannot fend off death. One power there is, supernatural, divine, greater than these. That power you may never feel, and simply because you do not believe that it exists, and will not take steps to put yourself into communication with it, by confessing Christ, and repenting and coming to Him for a life which only He can give.

It is then no disparagement to this mighty power of the resurrection to say that it is not uniformly felt in the world, that it varies in its effects on the human race, age by age, and day by day. That must be so. For this, as we said, is a strange thing, unlike any law of nature, apart, and acting on its own plane. If it come under any law, it is under the law of a spiritual world, which we cannot control, and before which we can simply bow and obey. And again, it is a law which any one with a will is free to resist, and may completely evade: he cannot keep it from helping others, but he can divert it from its path towards himself. A force such as this will be more or less discernible in its effects, in proportion, as men are more or less willing to yield to it. And since faith, and the readiness to suffer for Christ, are the essential conditions in us, so the power must be sought in operation only where men believe and live holy lives; and its work is most glorious and most wonderful, just where faith is strongest and self-denial most complete; where men who believe with all their heart and soul, and rejoice in tribulations, and trample this world under foot, and count all things but loss, that they may win Christ and be found

in Him. And here we have a measure of the state of the Church. For wherever faith is weak, and luxury overspreads the face of her people; when men hold feebly to the doctrine of the creed, are greatly afraid of the criticism of the ungodly, and prone to compromise with the spirit of the day; when they avoid self-denial, as something too hard, and would fain serve God and Mammon at the same time; when, instead of consulting the living oracles, they seek to wizards and witches, who are everywhere to be had and glad of pupils; when these signs thicken in the air, know that the power of the resurrection has lost its force, for the while, and expect the consequences, in the decay of your spiritual life, the dimness of your perceptions, the loss of Christian manhood, and that debility which threatens to end, as of old, in death.

My subject, far from being ended, is hardly begun. God forbid that we should forget that the power of His resurrection is strong to prevail even against those who deny it: that it works in spite of the infidel and the blasphemer; not *in* them indeed, but outside their sour hearts and against their designs; that it has changed things quietly; that this earth, with the temple of the Lord now built up in it, is a very different place from the earth of the ages prior to that victory over the grave. But this is too large a theme to touch at present. Let me close with this question. If you ask, where is the power of His resurrection in your own life, you must

ask more than that: you must ask, first, how strongly and stoutly you hold the faith in the fact; and secondly, how ready you are to bear the reproach of Christ, and to suffer for your love of Him. In this age the suffering entailed by a Christian profession may seem slight: it is not as yet an age of literal martyrdoms, though it may early turn to one. But no age lacks the elements of a true and sensible fellowship in His sufferings: you can find them, in quantity sufficient to test your own sincerity to the fullest. Not till you are quite sure of the firmness of your faith and the readiness of your heart to follow Christ, should you raise any question about His power. But be sure, that when you yourself are right sound and well, when you can say, "*Lord, I believe,*" when you can exclaim, "*O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready,*" the questions which you formed in other hours will die on your lips, and you shall be like him who, hesitating no longer, sank adoring before the Victor, answering and saying unto Him, "*My Lord and my God!*"

SERMON XIII.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

ST. JOHN XXI. 21, 22.

"Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, . . . What is that to thee? follow thou me."

THE saints of old time are the teachers of men of later days. Their histories, entire, are of absorbing interest; not one point is unimportant; and doubtless it was intended that we should learn even from their errors and defects. But here we tread on dangerous ground. For they have finished their course; for them this world is at an end; they are where they can never fall; our comments cannot affect them now; and if we have aught to say about them in disparagement or criticism, such sayings have a savor of presumption. Hence we do well to be cautious, slow to allude to imperfections, and reluctant to draw from their recorded failings what those lapses, perchance, may teach. Yet, perhaps, if we could hear their voices, they would rather that we spoke of them freely: no honest man desires to be over-rated or thought better than he really is. So may it be with the saints: and it is remarkable that they appear to have been at

some pains to have their failings and errors put on record, as if with a kind of generous consideration for us. It is as though, were one to go and confess his faults to another, he were to be met with a counter confession, and to hear it said to him : " My brother, I am no better than you ; you have disclosed to me your sins ; behold, they are also mine ; we must be penitents together before the Lord."

In such a frame of mind, respecting His holy and blessed servants, let us venture to look at the scene before us. It presents one of the many strange episodes in the life of that most noble and illustrious, yet most inconsistent, of the disciples of our Lord. Saint Peter, here, as elsewhere, gives us, in his own example, cause to search our hearts. It is a striking scene. It is the early morning, or at least, an early hour of the day. The place is the shore of the sea of Tiberias ; where the Lord has appeared to the Eleven, giving more than one proof of the truth of His resurrection and of His personal identity. There also, has Simon Peter, who had thrice denied the Saviour, been reinstated in his forfeited place ; and thrice has the solemn pastoral charge been spoken to him by the great Shepherd, bidding him feed His lambs and His sheep. Then, moreover, has the Lord added other words : He has spoken a prophecy. He has told Simon Peter what death he should die ; and finally, moving, as it seems, some steps along the shore, the Lord has bidden him to follow. One would naturally suppose, that

after all these things, Peter would have been wrapped in thoughts appropriate to such a position : that he would have gone after his Master with eyes riveted on His form, and a soul absorbed in reflections on His words. That utterance of the threefold pastoral charge ; that solemn foretelling of a martyr's death ; that call to leave all thought of other things and follow the great Redeemer : who ever heard more weighty words ? Of what, but Christ, could one be thinking, on whom had just been laid a charge beyond the power of man to keep, to whom had been disclosed as not far off a death of agony and blood, from which humanity instinctively recoils ? Yet Simon Peter is neither absorbed in, nor transported by, the words of Christ. Strange as it may appear, he thinks of something else. Bidden to follow Christ, and doubtless for some few steps complying with the command, his attention is presently distracted by the movements of another disciple. He turns about to observe his proceedings. He is curious concerning him ; he cannot restrain that sentiment ; instead of asking how best to follow Christ, he asks what some other man is to do ? It may be curiosity ; perhaps it is displeasure ; at all events, it is distraction of thought, and wandering in mind. And the Lord replied, with a manner apparently peremptory, if not stern and severe : "What is that to thee ? follow thou me."

Such is the scene before us ; and surely it has its lesson for persons such as we are. It reveals a side of human

nature which has its counterpart in numbers of men and women. We are more like God's saints than ever we deemed ourselves to be: like them in the faults which they had to outgrow before they could become saints, and, in the same degree, unlike them in the virtues which ultimately merited for them their name in His Church and their crown in His kingdom. Let us then pursue these thoughts, and find out whither they lead.

Who does not know what evil comes from that self-consciousness which is in our wretched hearts; that habit, for such it is in a great many, of busying ourselves about other persons, fretting ourselves about what they may think, do, or say, and secretly drawing contrasts between ourselves and them, thus multiplying to ourselves uneasiness and restlessness? Many are devoured by that gnawing worm. They cannot rest in God, because of distractions about their own estate, or because of anxiety as to their appearance in the eyes of others. Let such as these reflect on the scene on the shore of Tiberias. There stood the Lord before Peter; the Great King whom winds and sea obey. There, on the strand lay the evidences of His miraculous power, in the fishes which He, at a word, had given to their nets at the dawn of the morning, after the long night of fruitless toil had passed away. His voice, of pastoral authority, had just spoken, so tenderly, so lovingly; it had conferred powers on the apostle, such as no man taketh to himself; it had foretold the end of earth, and shown him the bitter way to the martyr's

crown ; yet Peter cannot control his thoughts ; he cannot fix them on the mysteries and wonders which are sounding in his ears and presented bodily to his faith ; he is engaged about the proceedings of a wretched man like himself : he must look at John ; he must turn about to see where he is and what he is doing ; and, to that end, he must stop following Christ, and for the moment forget that he had been bidden to do so.

And thus, we, who are no saints, but unworthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of the shoe of the humblest of those mighty men of old ; we also have a path to tread, and a commandment to keep straight on, and look neither to the right hand nor to the left : but we do not so, because of distractions which agitate us, and of certain thoughts that arise in our mind, thoughts which should have no place in a Christian soul.

These are of all kinds : they range from little to great, from trifling to serious, from empty bubbles of fancy to black draughts of poisonous meditation. Many of them belong to the category of vanity ; and such may well bring tears of unavailing shame and regret. What fools we are, to consider ourselves and our own insignificance as we do ! Here is a priest, for instance, who would give almost anything to be able to offer his service to the Lord, and to minister before his Master, with unconsciousness of self, yet finds it impossible to do so ; he is perpetually thinking of the people, and wondering how they are impressed by his manner, his way of per-

forming the divine offices, or the thing which he says. And here are persons who come to the house of the Lord, no doubt, with a general intention to be religious and devout, but cannot keep from observing their neighbors, nor forget that they are themselves liable to be observed. The lady enters the Church, and kneels in the presence of that Lord, whom she really believes to be in His holy temple: and yet, in kneeling, she cannot restrain a passing thought, whether her attitude so devout and becoming, and the folds of her dress so carefully disposed, and the air of religious recollectedness which she assumes, are perchance attracting the admiring attention of some one else. Nor are men free from this kind of consciousness, albeit the vice may take a different shape, and show itself by other signs.

And then we come to graver matters: as when, whatever the preacher may say, the hearer applies it to others, but never to himself. No one likes to take the fool's cap and set it deliberately on his own head; no one inclines to lay a moral to his own guilty heart, and say, with severe justice, "I am the man." We are deaf to words which ought to stir our souls, because we are thinking of some brother, to whom they appear to apply; men have gone forth from listening to utterances which ought to have shown them, as in a mirror, their own condition, with the remark: "How I wish that such a person could have heard that, for it described him exactly."

Let us not, however, dwell on these lower illustrations

of our theme, but go to more serious instances. There are high and noble spirits in this society of ours, who ought to be following Christ closely, and learning more and more of Him day by day, but are not doing so, because of the hold which some other one has on them; some person whom they ought not to regard, who is the bane and blight of their existence. There are figures passing up and down, in watching whom, they are so preoccupied, if not so completely absorbed, that at length they see Christ no more. "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." * Some are misled by the very grandeur and brilliancy of their ideals. Instead of looking right at the Master, and refusing to take their eyes from Him, they look at persons who seem to them to resemble Christ, make them their ideals, and strive day and night to copy them. What an error this is! It is like that horrible mistake in another branch of the Church, that we cannot go to our Lord and Saviour directly, but must approach Him through some mediator; there must be a mediator *with* the Mediator; some one must stand between the Mediator and us, as, for example, the Blessed Virgin, or some saint or angel, through whom only we may draw nigh to Him. Even so some make it the work of their devotional life, not to imitate Christ Himself, but to copy some one who was apparently a successful imitator of Him; they seem to think it easier to follow the

* St. Mark xiii. 22.

example of some good man or woman than that of the all Holy Lord and King of saints and angels, as if He were too great, as a model, and they must aim at a lower mark. There is extreme danger in this, as must be obvious :

For, first, we do not know the real history of the saints; none knows it but God. No man knows the true history of a human soul ; none, the true history of a saint. So that the perfections which are observable in those blessed ones, may perhaps be the result, in part, of circumstances in which it is impossible that we could ever be placed, and our cases and theirs may be so totally unlike, that to become what they became, is what could never occur in the nature of things :

And, secondly, the saints are of divers types and schools ; those of one age are unlike those of another : Catharine of Alexandria, and Catharine of Siena, though both followers of God, could hardly have been more unlike ; and so it was with Ignatius of Antioch, in the second century, and Ignatius of Spain, in the sixteenth ; alike in scarcely aught, save this, that they believed in the same Redeemer, and looked for salvation to the same precious blood. We cannot follow men and women, without following a human type ; perfection is not to be gained that way :

For, thirdly, it is to be remembered that the saints of God became such, not by living after the examples of other people, however good and holy, but by looking

directly at Christ Himself. Thus did they grow to what they are : it is in that manner only that we can become like them. Let us then leave off regarding human ideals so closely ; let us neither aim at looking like any other man or woman, nor fret ourselves because our experiences are not such as theirs, or because we cannot feel, or pray, or work, or love, as they seem to have done. If we are ever to advance, it must be by simple and sincere imitation of Christ : that is the secret and the means of perfection to the end of time. He is the same ; imitation of Him means the same thing, in the first age and in the last, and in all between : “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.” The disposition evident in some, to vex their souls because they are not what they wish to be, comes, in most cases, of taking a lower and a different standard. Christ, it is true, is infinitely perfect : that is the very reason why we should never be discouraged. We are finite : no wonder that we cannot attain to Him. To copy some creature like ourselves might lead us to a just despair ; for we might say : “What one human being is, another may become ; but I am behind my ideal, and so far, that I am discouraged and dejected, and know not what to do.” We shall have no such thoughts, if, ceasing to think of or look at others, we simply fix our eyes on Christ, and follow Him. Of course we follow at a distance ; at a vast distance ; yet it is all we have to do, and the way is sure. It makes men happy and humble to walk thus, looking at the infinite lover

of their souls : to know that He goes before and that they have but to keep on, and regard Him only, is peace. If it were their business to aim at equality with some companion, whose height, though great, was not inaccessible, they might become restless and despondent, and at length desist from the task.

But it is not always a saint that distracts the attention ; alas, it is not generally a saint, but some one quite the reverse. The cause of our distraction and indifference to Christ, is usually some most dangerous person whom we have met on the broad highways of the world : some one who says strange things which we must listen to, who writes things which we must read, who has his creed, his parable, his fable of things human and divine, wherewith to beguile the unwary and unsettle the unsteady. We wonder at these persons ; we wonder whether what they say is right, and whether what we believe is wrong ; we wonder what is to come of their words, whether the world is not going after them, and whether we had not better go too, along with the world : and so we take our restless eyes from Christ, and look about, and ask what such a man can prove or do or show us. We forget that it is the Resurrection Day ; that the darkness is past and that the true light now shineth ; that the Lord has already appeared to us, in the early morning of our lives ; that we are in Him by the waters of our regeneration in Holy Baptism. We forget that the evidences of His Resurrection and His Life are abundant, piled up upon the coasts

of time, in souls delivered from the troublesome waves of this world, and safe in His keeping on the eternal shore. We therefore halt, confused at the sounds of voices about us; we look to Christ one moment, then away from Him; we take a step forward, as if to go after Him, then turn round to listen to some one who speaks to us: we hesitate, we vacillate, we stand shilly-shally on the bank of the deep and solemn sea, we are half Christian, half heathen, and all because we cannot keep the heart and eyes where they ought to be kept. This is not right: let us leave it off. The hour comes in every life, when a man has to make his decision: he has to say; "I take my course, for life and for death; I shall keep it, please God, be the consequences what they may." So must each of us sometime or other decide between Christ and other persons. And when the decision is rightly made, there follows peace.

This is a strange and trying age of the world: a day of transition to better things through an evil process of perplexity and doubt. Many seem to be without any rooting or grounding in the faith; to have lost the knowledge of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Many, who ought to be teachers, seem at a loss what to say, or what to affirm; many drift, as in a fog, not knowing where the shore lies. One fault of the age may account for this: its exaggerated self-consciousness. It is almost ludicrous, it would be ludicrous if it were not painful, to see men so wrapped in their own imaginings,

so intensely loyal to *self*, that they can trust nothing else ; and reading, talking, and doubtlessly thinking, as if the first duty of man was to be in harmony with his own private fancies, and never to contradict and compromise his inward lights and wisdom. But they will grow out of that, and come back to their duty to God and to the world that needs nothing so much as men strong in the faith and firm in action. Stand not hesitating and undecided, to hear what everybody about you has to say, to exchange vain words and compliments with the men-children of the world, or to chase the phantoms of your own or of other people's imaginations. Fix your eyes on Christ ; forget yourself. Let men talk as they will ; let the age make its preachment. What is that to thee ? Follow thou Him.

SERMON XIV.

THE YEARS OF THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

PSALM LXXVII. 10.

“ And I said, ‘ It is mine own infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most Highest.’ ”

FOR nearly three thousand years, the Psalms of David, as they are called, have been the daily Manual, the Prayer Book and Hymnal, of the people of God: they will be such until the end of this world; surely, they are immortal songs. Among them is one written by Moses before his death; they formed the basis of the vocal worship in the Temple and Synagogue, as now in the Church of Christ; they were recited, in course, by the Lord when He was here on earth, a worshipper in His own house, and by the Apostles whom He chose to preach the gospel; to-day, everywhere, the Psalter makes the chief part of the Daily Office; nay, we read that in the other world, they are still singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb.* Marvellous, indeed, are those inspired songs, which, unless inspired, must long since have lost their practical value; the fact of their constant use, and per-

* Rev. xv. 3.

fect freshness, through these thousands of years, attests the fact that they were written under the afflatus of the Holy Ghost. As for any one of them in particular, its beauty is best appreciated when it is read as a whole. For each psalm has a theme, as musicians say, "a motive," about which its harmonies are woven. And this 77th Psalm, from which my text is taken, is thus perfect in itself. It is the soliloquy of a despondent soul, which, describing its own special trials, proceeds to disclose their remedy. Let us read it through, from the beginning, that we may the better draw forth its moral.

The opening verses express a state of mind which many of you must have felt ; yea, rather blessed, or even unheard-of, are they who have *not* felt it. "I cry unto God with my voice ;" not with mere inarticulate sound like a brute, but "with my voice," in words of complaint, in accents of reproach. I cry thus "in the time of my trouble ;" and that time is the whole of our earthly life ; for it is full of trouble and trial of some kind or other, from the hour of birth till that of departure hence. "Man is born unto trouble," and "the time of trouble" is this existence into which he is born. "And when I am in heaviness I will think upon God : " but that thought does not at first, nor always, bring comfort. Many think of God in their trouble, accusing Him and complaining of Him, as if He were the author of that trouble, or at all events unjust and unrighteous in not removing it. This tone of mind is exactly expressed.

“Will the Lord absent himself forever, and will he be no more entreated? Is his mercy clean gone forever, and is his promise come utterly to an end for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will he shut up his loving kindness in displeasure?” I ask you, have you not sometimes felt like that? If really earnest in your religion, if strong believers in God, if in the habit of talking with Him as a child with the father, out of your own heart, have you not had such thoughts about Him? Perhaps you remember how, when friends, or fortune, or honor, or joy, forsook you, you felt as if God also had forsaken you; and the thought of a happier time, when He seemed very near, made your sense of desolation more oppressive. “Will the Lord absent himself forever?” Will He, who was once ever near me, stay away, till I feel as if He would never return? “Will He,” whose answer to my prayer once seemed so quick, “be no more entreated as of old?” “Hath He,” who once was love and tenderness, “forgotten to be gracious?” Hath He indeed forgotten me, and left me alone, unheard, unhelped, un comforted? Thus perchance have you felt, thus did you speak, in moments of depression and despondency; and so you were led to the strange conclusion which follows. “And I said,” at last, tired as it were of these rebellious and unfaithful lamentations, “I said, It is mine own infirmity: I will,” shake off this numbness, this spiritual lethargy, this horrid oppression of mistrust, and “remember the years of the

right hand of the most high." That word opens the window to the outer light, and lets in the sunshine; then comes the relief, in the thought of "the years of the Right Hand of the Most High."

Reaction, return, recovered hold on the lost, begin with confession. "It is mine own infirmity." My distrust, my loss of confidence, my dismal presages, are, undoubtedly, the sign of weakness somewhere; they indicate infirmity of course; but it is not God's weakness, but mine. God is strong, not I; it is I that am infirm, not God. What my emotions prove is this: that I am low, demoralized and run down physically, mentally, spiritually. The trouble is all in me: partly physical, because the mortal, sickly body must infect the soul; mental, because the human mind also has its maladies; spiritual, because when the thoughts are wrong thoughts, and not in accord with the thoughts of God, the spirit must be clouded. And therefore I confess and say, that the infirmity is "mine own;" it is in me, and not in Him whom I mistrust and accuse; and I emphasize the act of penitence, and say, *It is* mine own; it cannot be that the promise hath come to an end, or that the covenant has been broken. The mere notion that there could be unfaithfulness in the Lord bespeaks my own miserable state in having thought such a thing possible. Take it in that way, dear brethren, if you would deal with this question rationally. The phenomenon is common; none more so. You know how strangely people talk and act when low

and ill, what prejudices they take, what odd notions vex their brains, what unnatural distortion takes place in their views. In such cases we say, pityingly, "This is only a part of the disease ; these are symptoms of the malady." I knew a mother once, who abhorred the very sight of her infant child, and drove it from her breast ; of course her act was the sign of mental trouble ; it was "her own infirmity," and proved nothing in the world but that. Even so, persons may doubt of the Christian faith, or forsake the guides of their youth, or abandon the church, simply because they are out of sorts, morbid, and restless. Of such we say, "It is their own infirmity ;" it shows that they are more or less diseased in body, in mind, in soul ; and it shows nothing more.

So much for the confession, which is the first practical step to peace. Next of the remedy, the tonic, the medicine for the mental disquiet. "I will remember the years of the Right Hand of the Most High." How shall one interpret such words, or how draw forth their sublime meaning ? There are many striking expositions of them in the writings of the ancient fathers of the Church. No wonder ; for they open, at once, a prospect without limit, a scene without bounds. Here the eternity of God is contrasted with the hand-breadth measure of man. The Right Hand of the Most High ; its work through the years that are past ; what suggestions are here, to silence weak complaint, to lift the soul far up above the trouble of this world !

The Right Hand of God, is the symbol of "all power in heaven and in earth,"* and first of creative power. Even as the sower, when, going forth in the days of spring, he flings, right and left, the seed into the ground; so did that Almighty Hand strew the star-dust through the silent fields of space; it set the sun and moon on their regent thrones; it hung the earth on nothing;† it ordered "times and seasons, and days, and years."‡ The thought sufficed of old to humble the proudest spirit. "When I consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, *what is man?*" §

And then the Right Hand of God made us, in His own image, to have dominion in our turn. And that Hand was the firm support, and tender guide of His once happy children. The vision of Paradise comes back, where He fed them in the beautiful garden as in a green pasture, and led them forth beside the waters of comfort, till they sinned; when the Hand warned them away from the home of which they were unworthy, and shut the gate, excluding them till the long, long penance of the ages be accomplished, and the iniquity which poisoned the common blood be pardoned.

Look through the Old World history, and see the judgment done on the sinner by the Right Hand of the Most High. Ever is it writing, in blazing letters, on the wall of the world; ever bringing down the

* St. Matt. xxviii. 18. † Job xxvi. 7. ‡ Gen. i. 14. § Psalm viii. 3. 4.

mighty from their seat and abasing them that walk in pride. From the open hollow of that hand are poured the waters of Noah's flood, and the fire which burnt up the accursed cities of the plain; "He sent out His arrows and scattered them, He cast forth lightnings and destroyed them;" * yet still did He "bring forth His people with joy and His chosen with gladness, feeding them with a faithful and true heart, and ruling them prudently with all his power." †

But think of the right hand, and of what it can do; that most wonderful member of this body. Its offices are numberless; it is like the executive function in the political system. Whatever the mind think, whatever the will decree, whatever the heart desire: heart, will, mind, must wait till the hand can act. It holds fast, it lets go; it urges forward and restrains; it points the way, it warns, it directs, even from afar off; it chastises and caresses, it soothes and tortures; by pressure, it conveys unspoken thoughts, as if it had a power of speech; offered, it is a sign of cordial friendship; refused, of displeasure and alienation. To tell the uses of the hand, and the purposes it serves, would be to give a catalogue of great part of the intelligent and conscious actions of men, wherein, to some extent or other, that member is employed. Even so wide is the scope of those acts of the Almighty, which are included in the symbolic speech about His Right Hand. Of this the Psalmist must have been

* Psalm xviii. 14.

† Psalm cv. 43; lxxviii. 72.

thinking, when he wrote his touching verses ; on his soul were thronging the wonders of the past, before his day ; the way of God so holy, doing miracles, declaring power, mightily delivering His own, recompensing judgment to the sinner. The years of the Right Hand, as David looked at them in order, were too full for one mind to fathom ; but the record was one to inspire courage and rebuke the spirit of distrust.

And think what we can add since David's time, what has been going on since his day, to help us and increase our faith. The wonders of the divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, with those sovereigns of the rival houses ; the austere prophets looming up at intervals, ever with some dread message for the world ; the two Captivities, the earlier and the later ; the return of the Jews to their own land and rebuilding of the Temple : and after those, the wonders of the middle term, between the ending of the old and the beginning of the new, ere yet men came to the dividing time, and a novel date of years was to begin, from the birth of a poor woman's baby in the humblest city of an out-of-the-way and forgotten corner of the earth. O, if thou canst, bring thy foolish doubts, thy vain despondings, thy morbid questionings this way, till we come to the Day of the Word-made-Flesh, and forget them all, while thou dost gaze astonished at the operations of His hand at Bethlehem, in the three and thirty years of that life in Judæa of which thou knowest. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son, the Word, the Agent of the

Father's will in our redemption, has been mystically called by the old Catholic authors, the Right Hand of the Most High, and surely thine own infirmity, of will, of thought, of reason, should be turned to strength and assurance of faith and love, in considering those years spent among us. "O true medicine for the weakness of doubt ! How better can we learn that it is only *our own infirmity* which makes us question the perfect love of God towards us, than by remembering the long and sorrowful three and thirty years, which He, who is the Right Hand of the Most Highest, spent in the form of a servant that He might seek and save that which was lost ?" *

After that comes the history of the Holy Catholic Church. And that, being the history of the kingdom which shall never be destroyed, is worthy of its dignity and altogether wonderful. It is a story of mighty signs and great deliverances wrought from age to age, whereby the devil has been foiled in every attempt against our Lord, and the promise remains this hour sure that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. Above all, it is the record of one perpetually renewed miracle, to wit, that Jesus Christ, the poor man of Nazareth, who lived unknown to the world, and died as a criminal, has ever since ruled the hearts of men, with the power and fulness of God ; that this very hour a thing is true, which has been ever since He left us, to wit, that one by one souls are drawn to Him, are strangely helped by Him in

* Neale and Littledale, Commentary on the Psalms, *in loco*.

a way that none can explain, come to love Him more than aught else, are transformed, changed, born again, spiritualized, refined, guided in doubt, comforted in sorrow, elevated socially and bettered physically, by the simple power of His name; that they owe it to Jesus Christ, the King of love, their Shepherd, that they can rejoice in their life and die with words of triumph on their lips. This is a standing wonder, making these 1800 or 1900 years all years of the Most High, in which His Right Hand is working an everlasting, never failing miracle, of which every true Christian in this congregation or elsewhere is an example. And all the while, thanks to that same God, other movements are in progress connected with the Gospel as a secret cause; great changes, related to the spiritual changes in the kingdom of souls. The world grows in knowledge, yea, though for the time sorrow be increased; and there comes a gradual fraternization of the nations, and a unifying of all who bear the same image of God. These years are full of signs of His power and glory, and in them is more than enough to lay the fears and hush the complaints of the timid and the doubter.

Behold, then, the motives to confidence and peace. They are abundant; they will reach you as soon as you confess your own infirmity. Do so courageously, despite the pride which now restrains you, and is at the bottom of the trouble, and your reward shall be ample in the

sight of that strength which sustains the round world and all that is therein.

It is indeed a glorious study, that of the years of the Right Hand of the Most High. They are long, very long; from them unroll, panorama like, the events which make history; stamped on them everywhere is the impress of mind, design, force; knowing what may be, ordering what shall be, compelling every other power to yield at last, vanquished in its death. And against them appears what? The bubbles which men blow of the froth of their conceits; the vapor which our life is; the rise and fall of upstart opposers of God; the wiping out of kingdoms, philosophies, systems, as a man turneth a dish upside down. Fast do the adversaries fade away; they do but little harm; the cord is broken, the thread soon cut; the world forgets them, or remembers but to chide their folly. The eternal years of God drink up these little lives of ours, and all in them that is not made secure by faith and religion, even as the sun drinks up the mist, or the ocean takes in the drops from the passing clouds which break above it and vanish forever.

This is the way to confidence and rest. Retire within yourself, and meditate of the infinite power, the sure Providence, the unchangeableness of the Most High. Consider the days of old, the years of His Right Hand. When uneasy and depressed, when under the influence of any of the infirmities of life, rise, if you can, from your dust and ashes, and think of God. It may be that the

adversary lies hard upon you ; but dream of the latter days and of that which they shall bring. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him ; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set and the books were opened." * This is the end, and to that sublime vision shall he be led who will thoughtfully trace, through the records of the world and the little story of his personal experience, the working of the Right Hand of God.

Our infirmity is but a sign of the narrowness of the bonds in which we are shut up while this life lasts. We can make that life narrower than it need to be ; or we can push bravely forth to wider bounds. In narrowness of any kind, men wither and dry up ; by nursing their private wrongs, stimulating their own imaginations, hardening into their own thoughts ; in broad views of Life, Providence, Grace, and Work, they grow and find rest. Only be sure that you know what real breadth is, and what narrowness is, and do not mistake the latter for the former. The place is broad, wherever men see God most clearly, and see all in God, and compare all by God as the standard, and do all to God. The place narrows

* Daniel vii. 9, 10.

and grows more strait, the farther away we send Him in our unbelief; it is narrowest, where He has been most effectually excluded. Just at present, there is nothing so narrow in this world as its unbelief. It is narrow, because unbelief is and must be; but it is narrower than usual, and most dogmatic, an unbelief which is persistent, petulant, angry, insolent; raging against God and the light, like waves which foam out their own shame,* like a maniac clashing his fetters in his cell. I repeat, if you wish to find the narrowest of all narrow things, the most dogmatic, the most violent, go to the skeptical and infidel schools. The breadth of which I spoke lies in the revolt from their teachings. To attain it, let Christ dwell in your heart by faith; be rooted and grounded in the love of Him; and thus shall ye comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height; yea, ye shall know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and at the last ye shall be filled with all the fulness of God, and the infirmities and the former troubles shall be forgotten, and shall be hidden forever, nor come any more into mind.

* Jude 13.

SERMON XV.

IDLE FEARS.

PSALM LIII. 5.

“ They were afraid where no fear was.”

EVERY one must have heard of borrowing trouble. It is generally done by persons who have little real trouble of their own. There are some fortunate folk in this world, whose path through life is lit with all but continual sunshine, since, by God's good providence they are free from any very heavy care ; yet of these, there be some who, as if they could not exist without trouble, go here and there, and borrow enough of it to make themselves uncomfortable. Others again, who have already trouble enough, must borrow a little more, to weigh themselves still lower down. “ The borrower is servant to the lender ; ” and thus it comes to pass, that some persons are found groaning under burdens which they need not have borne at all, and that others make themselves miserable, who, though not without crosses of their own, might have enjoyed an average amount of happiness, had they but known the terms on which it may be purchased.

Now this habit of borrowing trouble, of making one's self uneasy about little or nothing, of groping among dark and painful subjects, which might have been avoided, is, in part, constitutional; it may rise from the physical habit, or from temporary physical causes: and in that case the preacher has nothing to say about it in his official relation to the self-tormentor. But there are many instances in which the thing is not constitutional, or at least only so in part; cases in which it is clearly one's own fault that he vexes himself in the fashion which we have described, and must be held responsible, in great measure, for his own discomfort. Here we may speak, and with hope of doing the part of the physician to the soul. To trace the sin, for it is a sin when so regarded, in all its symptoms, and through all its ramifications, would take too long. Let us limit ourselves, now, to one special topic under the general head, and think of the case of those who borrow trouble by permitting themselves to be the victims of their fears. Of such persons the number is, unfortunately, great, and as for the causes of their alarm and anxiety, their name is Legion.

It may be said, of many of us, perhaps of most of us, that we live in fear the greater part of our lives. There is hardly a day that we are not uneasy about something or other that may happen, that we are afraid is going to happen. To give instances of the kind is not what should be asked of the preacher; he is safe

in leaving that to the people. The whole field of life gives aliment to this habit. We are afraid for the country at large, for the city, for the Church, for the social order. We are afraid for ourselves, for those nearest to us and dearest, and for those in whom, on other ground than that of relationship, we feel deep interest. We fear lest we should lose our health or our powers, physical or mental, lest some one should die, lest changes and disasters should come; we are apprehensive of poverty, and solitude, and of future years in which we may survive everybody that cared for us and loved us. We fear for children, lest they should not grow up to be a comfort to us; and for friends lest they should drop us and take up some one else. We fear for Christianity, lest it should really be, as some say, in final decay, and for the Church, lest it should all be overgrown with errors, and for the Government lest it should take the benefit of a bankrupt act and stand before all nations dishonored and disgraced.* When we have an ache or a pain, we think it the omen of some awful malady; and when we hear of another's affliction or sorrow, we begin to wonder whether the same thing may not happen to us; and if the sun shine we dread a sunstroke, and if the wind blows drearily at night, we lie awake and tremble at we know not what. Thus, and in so many other ways that no one could tell their number, we fear; and meanwhile, we cannot enjoy what we have for the dread

* Preached at the time of the "Greenback" agitation.

of something that may happen. There are cases in which this habit amounts to a disease: and there are those whose characters it so transforms and ruins, that they are always complaining, and are fain to cry, "Who shall show us any good?"

Now it is a wonderful thing to observe to what an extent people can torture themselves when they try, and what an immense amount of trouble may be had on every hand, for the mere asking the loan of it. But what deserves special attention is this: that in a large number of cases there is really no ground at all for the anxieties into which they fall; and that many have found, after giving themselves no end of distress, that they had been afraid where no fear was; that the distress was the result of their imagination; that the evils they dreaded never came to pass; that, while they were shivering and shaking, all was going forward well. This is the special case to which your attention is called; the very case described by the Psalmist; and it may be useful to consider wherein lies the sinfulness of this thing, and by what means the fault may be cured.

I spoke of this habit as a sin. There is a great difference in the quality and degree of sins; some are graver than others, some are positive and some negative. This is a sin of thoughtlessness and carelessness; the sin of one who overlooks what he might have observed, and ought, by all means, to have heeded. When there is real danger, a certain kind of fear is in order: not to have it would be

foolhardiness ; but as to the habit of being always nervously apprehensive, and never passing a day without dreading, one knows not exactly what, or dreading what we have no sound reason for judging to be imminent ; this certainly shows a culpable forgetfulness of certain truths which form the basis of a peaceful life. The essence of habitual fear seems to consist in this : that the sufferer does not think as he ought to think of the sovereignty of God Almighty, that he looks on the dark instead of the bright side of things, that he forgets the good in despondent musing on the evil, that he dreads the devil and bad men more than any Christian ought to, that the world, with its concerns, has too large a place in his thoughts, that his own affairs, his own interests, his own comfort, absorb him. If he trusted in God, if he remembered that the world is under a wise and just moral government, if he were as indifferent to the chances and changes of life as we all ought to be, if he rested on the everlasting promises so surely that the promise of the world seemed naught in comparison, if he sought first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness, what should such a man fear ? To fear where no fear is, to be disquieting himself in vain, shows certainly that in his religion there is something wrong.

There is another argument to show that this habit has at least the nature of sin. "To fear where no fear was," is, in the Psalms, a description of the wicked. In more than one place the expression occurs ; and, note, that

wherever it occurs, the persons described are the ungodly. "There were they brought in great fear, even where no fear was." These were the enemies of the Lord who, by way of judgment on their crimes, and, in order to their confusion and overthrow, were allowed to fall victims to the terrors of the imagination, and made to fly before foes which had no real existence. Such an exhibition of weakness is what God's servants ought never to make : if they suffer in that fashion, they put themselves in the place of the unjust. From panic and foolish dismay, their faith, their love, their trust, should save them; and when it is not so, we infer that in faith, love, and trust they must be far below the mark : and so, again, they are proved guilty.

Let us proceed to try and point out a cure for the habit thus hastily analyzed. As for this sin, which it sometimes is, this fault which it always is, there are remedies for it; they have already been to some extent indicated. But to state them more formally, they seem to be three in number :

First, the habitual thought upon Almighty God, in His providence and His power over us :

Secondly, the resolve not to look on the dark side of things if we can possibly help it, but to watch the lights that shine through the picture of existence :

And thirdly, to consider how often good has come out of evil, and how, in the long run, things seem to be made, somehow, by the Lord, to end for the best and to promote the happiness of His creatures.

First then, we say to the timid, keep God in mind. What should you fear, if you know that He is overhead? You are little, insignificant, miserable compared to Him. If you dread personal enemies, they are intrinsically just as insignificant, and just as miserable, as yourself; to God, as nothing; and God is on your side. If what you dread is no personal foe, but some such thing as ill health, or calumny, or poverty, or solitude, God is worth all that you can lose, and you will still have Him for your strength and your portion forever. This is no unreal or imaginary comfort; it has upheld thousands in real trouble; it is, therefore, tenfold more efficacious, where there is no real trouble at all.

And next turn your minds steadily away from dark views of things. As Charles Kingsley puts it well and beautifully: "Never begin to look darkly at a subject, without checking yourself and saying, Is there not a bright side to this? Has not God promised the bright side to me? Is not my happiness in my own power? Do not I know that I am ruining my mind, and endangering the happiness of those dear to me by looking at the wrong side? There are two ways of looking at every occurrence—a bright and a dark side. Two modes of action—which is most worthy of a rational being, a Christian, and a friend? It is absurd as a rational being to torture one's self unnecessarily. It is inconsistent in a Christian to see God's wrath, rather than His mercy, in everything." And so, let the fearful resolve to believe, that whatever

may happen to them, there will be mercy in it somewhere, and that nothing can ever separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And, next, there is a remedy against unreal fears, which, with any intelligent man or woman, ought to have great force. It lies in considering how, in real trouble, real, positive, and terrible distress, God in His Providence has brought good out of evil. To prove to one's own full satisfaction that there are blessings in adversities, and wonderfully happy results from what looked at the time like unmitigated, if not hopeless, disasters, ought to be the easiest thing in the world with any reasonable being. The history of the world, the history of the Church, the history of any life that has a history, is full of such examples. Nothing could have been darker than the outlook for Christianity, when the Arian heresy grew up and overshadowed all the world; and yet that dreary day gave the Church an Athanasius, worth more alone to man and God than all that ever denied the faith which he taught; it gave, moreover, to the Nicene Faith such perfect expression, such an exact formulary, such a wondrous philosophical and logical precision, that it has ruled, ever since, the intellects, as it always ruled the hearts, of the flower of all nations upon earth. Never was there, as appeared, a drearier day for man than that in which the fair city of Constantinople, capital of the world, and perhaps destined to be so again, fell under the scimitar of the Turk: "it seemed to be the death of Christian hope,

the fall of Christ before a human impostor." In fact, it proved the contradiction and confusion of all imaginations, and the beginning of a splendid development for man and for that holy religion which makes men free. Now take such instances as these, whereof indeed the history of the world, of the Church, of the lives of men, is full, and think them over. Even real disasters end in blessing, and light comes gloriously out of darkness. What then of your fears? There may be no foundation for them whatever, and in that case, you ought to be ashamed of them. But even grant the worst, and suppose that they may be realized: what then? Cannot the same power turn them to good? May not what you dread become to you the very thing you need to complete your development? Either way, fear not. If your fears are vain, it is mere self-torment; if there be ground for them, trust the Lord in this thing, and you may yet rejoice that the evil did not fail to come.

When our Blessed Lord was on the sea of Galilee one stormy night, He looked from the little vessel upon the angry waters and into the face of the commotion of the elements, and with a divine dignity, spake the words, "*Peace, be still.*" It seems, at times, as if what we needed was some voice of Power like that, to address us and tell us simply to be still. If there be no audible voice to make such utterance when it is needed, at least let Faith bring up the calm figure of the Lord as if He were close at hand and in sight, quelling and

quieting these restless, foolish, troublesome imaginations of ours and bringing them into subjection to the law of the kingdom of Peace. Beloved soul, you have one thing against you; and one thing, and a far greater, for you. Against you is this vexatious world; and unfortunately it seems as if, with the growth in our boasted civilization, and the multiplying of discoveries, inventions, and what men call improvements, the power of the world to worry and irritate was on the increase. The world is against you; the uneasy world, which, like the wicked, and the troubled sea, is never at rest. It requires marvellous patience and faith, and a very earnest, loving trust in Divine Providence, and a great self-control, to keep one's propriety under the special trials of this age in which knowledge and sorrow go on growing, hour by hour, apace. But with us all this while, is One who guides, though invisible, and governs men, even though they do not acknowledge Him. Only believe and trust, and try to get rid of selfishness and self-love. Perhaps, after all, self is at the bottom of the fears of those who fear where no fear is. If you felt, that the highest end of life is to glorify the Lord, and that there is no condition in life in which you cannot glorify Him, you would also feel that it makes very little difference, *where* you are, *what* you are, *how* you are, if only you are doing that thing. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; why borrow from the day after? Wherever we are, whatever we are, howsoever

we may find ourselves, what matters it, if only we be glorifying the Lord in our life, and teaching others their duty by our example?

In conclusion : if any ask how to do what is necessary to render himself independent of idle fears, or how to learn to bear the real troubles of this world, our answer must be, that the way is : first, to pray, and secondly, to practice. Ask for the grace that you need ; ask it day by day ; such prayers can not be vain. And, again, practice, by forcing your mind off from morbid gloomy thoughts, by denying it the luxury of sentimental revery, by insisting that it shall think of God's love and goodness, by telling it that it shall look out of the windows into the sunlight, and not inside into the gloom and shadow. And as life passes on, you will find comfort and courage in your soul, where timidity and distress used to be, and with the ending of this world, there shall come a large experience such as many of us must have had in our own little lives. Surely there have been cases within the range of your own observation, which illustrate the words of our text. You must remember times when you trembled, feared, and perhaps agonized over something or other, and "came" literally "into great fear;" and, lo ! all went well ; not one of the things that scared you so much came to pass ; nothing happened ; you can see, looking back, that there was no fear, no ground for alarm, everything was safe, and your suspense, your misery, your self-inflicted suffering, came simply to much ado

about nothing. In such deliverances there is much to humiliate, but there is also something very sweet. They tell us, what is the great lesson of life ; how very good the Lord is and how very near ; how absolutely we ought to trust Him ; and with the blessed, who shall be saved at the last, that reflection will suffice to keep them humble for all eternity. Their fears, when they lived here, were idle fears ; “ they were afraid where no fear was ; ” they, and those they loved, were safe all the time, and though God led them round about through trying places and amid painful scenes, they ought to have loved, they ought to have trusted, their hearts ought never to have failed. Most insignificant shall seem to us at that day things which now we magnify inordinately, and we shall wonder at ourselves that we never realized how safe, how secure, we actually were. Never has there been, and never shall there be, to any one who believes, loves, and trusts, an hour in which he may not unite with St. Paul in his sublime outburst of triumphant joy, and cry, “ I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ! ”

SERMON XVI.

THE BURDEN OF LIFE.

PSALM LV. 22.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord.”

ALL who have read and loved that rare old allegory, the Pilgrim's Progress, must remember the place where poor Christian got rid of the burden which he had carried with him in his flight from the City of this world. He came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below there was a sepulchre: and as he came up with the cross, the burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and rolled away till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and he saw it no more. How many have read that quaint old story with the wish that it might be with them as with Christian; that the load of sorrow and distress, which, in some shape, every child of man must bear, might thus fall off, leaving the heart light and the spirit free! How many would do, in very truth, what was done in a figure in the allegory! Into such reflections as these we fall, in reading or listening to the gentle monition, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.”

An act is spoken of, an act of one's own. In the parable, the man went on until he met a new object in the cross, and then, of its own accord, his burden fell from his back. But here in the Psalm, the thought is different. The sufferer feels a weight which makes his life weary ; he looks about to see how and where he can place it, on whom he can cast it, how he can rid himself of that which he can no longer bear. This burden will not roll away of itself, he must take it up and put it on some other, if perchance one may be found to serve that turn. And when we are bidden to cast our burdens on the Lord, it is implied that He is not the only one on whom they might be cast, that there is a choice, nay, that there are others ready to help, if we prefer their aid to that of Christ. Surely there is enough here to furnish material for reflection, as one asks himself, what his special burden may be, why he should cast it on the Lord, and on whom, or on what, or where else, he might cast it, instead of availing himself of the proffered help ? And, first, of the burden of life.

What should this be but the pressure, in some shape or other, of the imperfection of this present existence ? A perfect being has no burden ; nothing is too great, nothing too small ; there is neither excess nor defect ; there is no falling short of a given mark, no inconsistency, no incompetency, no pain, no disease, no slow declining and fading away. But we are not perfect ; we were conceived and born in sin ; the brand of sin is on us ; our life is brief,

and the knowledge of that brevity haunts the fast-flying hours. And in us there is a soul which can plan what we have no power to execute; a spirit still young, even while the frail and feeble mechanism through which it acts, is fast falling to pieces. And in us also is a heart, which draws toward something that can fill it full, yet finds not such perfect satisfaction: and we see distinctly, an ideal of righteousness and true holiness, which we do not attain. Then, too, we are in a dissolving world, which we cannot help loving; and usually our happiness is bound up with lives which we know to be precarious; we cannot understand the causes of things, nor foresee what a morrow may bring forth, and at any moment our prosperity may be shattered, and our entire state upset by sudden changes and chances, for which we are not responsible. We rely on our supposed knowledge of the reasons for things, yet some day our knowledge appears to have been no knowledge at all, but something occurs to turn it to folly, and to show us that we were totally mistaken where we thought that we were wise. And we have great longings for rest, but there is no time for it; and for peace, but there is no peace; and foes assail us, and do what we will, we cannot drive them away, but like bats and ravens they make the air dark with gloomy wings; and falsehood dresses herself so like truth, that it seems useless to try and tell them apart; and all the time, one feels that there is something wrong in him, in his system, his thoughts, his life, his mind and will; he is not what he

might be and ought to be ; he is infirm of purpose, slow in act, weak in faith, love, trust ; were it not for some powers constraining him, he knows not how, and providentially helping him as he deserves not to be helped, he might in an hour fall so low as to forfeit the esteem of men and the mercy of God. Such are a few of the features of this our imperfect life ; and it is the sense of that imperfection, in some form or other, that makes the burden of existence. We long to be better, wiser, purer than we are, to be safe from storm and clear of anxiety, to be strong and well, in body, mind, and spirit ; that we are not what we would be, either towards our God or towards our poor, dear brethren in this world, where all alike have sorrow and demand help, is, in short, the burden of this mortal life.

Now on whom shall this be cast ? Why on the Lord ? Why not on some one else ? Are we shut up to the choice, either to bear it alone or to cast it on Him ? Nay, not at all. There are other ways of disposing of this burden : why should not some of them do ?

Your load of care, whatever it be that takes away the light heart, and makes the weeks seem slow, and oppresses you with a sense of dissatisfaction with what you have, and envy for others who seem so much brighter : this you may cast into the strong flood of a busy, stirring life. In ceaseless occupation some have tried to get rid of their burden of troubled thoughts. There are men who dare not be alone an hour, or idle a day : they have that within which they must forget, and it can

only be forgotten by keeping busy. This, however, is but an exchange of burdens; it is like shifting the burden from one shoulder to another; it is curing unrest by by a new and fresh unrest. Or if, for a while the old burden disappear, if the torrent sweep it away out of sight, yet shall it be like bread cast upon the waters, to return again after many days. And the time comes when no man can work; the latter hours when the world with its activities, retiring, leaves the man alone; and the flood of the years which bore the load away will sweep about again and cast it, an unwelcome object, at his feet, who thenceforth can be rid of it no more. In a very busy life the pain of a heart that knoweth its own bitterness may for some time be stilled; but the evening of such a life will not be light and pleasant, but full of clouds denser far than those of the heavy day.

Will you then cast your burden on the gay world, and hope to lose sight of it there? We all know how often that is tried. It is a notable expedient, and has been from the first. This is what they mean who talk of drowning care in pleasure; and for a time the thing works well, and the cheat, for cheat it is, goes undetected. Here is one who would fain lay aside the load which might be cast upon the Lord, and sees before him an alluring prospect where men and women are apparently thoroughly happy. The world of pleasure is always ready to relieve us of our burdens; as we enter her

wide and attractive halls, there are ministering spirits at the doors to take from the incomer what robe or garment of sorrow he may have, and put it away. The worst of this is, that the thing so put away is not lost, nor destroyed; it is carefully wrapped up; it is marked with your name; and it is there in its dark receptacle, waiting till the entertainment breaks up, and ready for you again. Within the great dance-hall, and up and down through the illuminated gardens, where the music is playing and everything looks fair, they are laughing and singing, and going to and fro, and the sorrow is forgotten for the hour, and it seems to have been wise and right to dispose in that way of the burden of our sorrow and our sin. But what we brought in with us, we must take again as we go forth; and to the old load shall be added a hundred-fold of weight of shame and remorse. Think of him who would drown his care in strong drink, as thousands do; who would fly from the reproaches of his conscience to the company of the lewd and the impure. Certainly that man is eased of his burden, but not as Christian was. One has met him, the ruddy cup in hand, the dreary painted, bedizened figure of the dead-alive on his arm; and in presenting these attractions he has taken the burden from the wretch: but that one is the Devil, who will carefully treasure up your pack of ills, and in due time return it to you when your soul sickens in your miserable life, and when the thin veil hides no longer the loathsome horror of those ways of despair.

Can we think of any other expedient, to save us from the alternative of going straight to the Lord? There is yet another suggestion, perchance you may cast your burden on some friend or fellow sinner. There is good reason in this and sound sense. Men in sore trouble instinctively seek human sympathy; they look about for some one to whom to apply for comfort and pity. Nor is this, like the other expedients we have mentioned, exclusive of the last and best. It is natural for us to tell our griefs to each other; perhaps to confess our sins one to another; a sorrow shared is a sorrow lessened. But here also is danger. Friendship is an uncertain thing; it is often too frail to bear rude handling; it evaporates under pressure. Few have friends who are willing to bear their burdens; very few have friends who are able to do it. Think of the judgment and patience, the wisdom and prudence, that are needed to make one man the sufficient helper of another; of the unselfishness which it requires to let one's life be dimmed by the shadows of another's sorrow. And again, there are friends who are not really such; I mean that they are not the people that we really need; they have all the disposition in the world to help, they mean right; but they have not the character, or the principle, or the qualities required for the work. Many a mischief has been made greater, many an evil intensified, by calling in the help of some ready but injudicious friend. A man to be a real helper ought to be wise and good, a true and faith-

ful guide, calm, strong, learned, prudent. Every argument which leads us to cast ourselves on such a friend, is an argument in favor of One who is all that and more ; to whom the wise man owes his wisdom, and the strong man his strength. If there be reason and good sense in seeking some brother to help me bear my burden, there is a higher reason still, and a deeper sense in passing by the lesser and going direct to the greatest of all.

And thus are we brought to God, as the best on whom to cast the burden, for the simple reason that none else but He can give us relief. Not the world, in its cares or in its pleasures, not sin, with its well-drugged cup, not friend or brother, weak like ourselves, can help us, beyond a little while ; and if there be in a man the power to aid effectually, it is only because, to some extent, he brings to his work those qualities which are in perfection in the Lord. And let this thing be done as simply, as sincerely as possible ; the more simply the better. Go to thy Lord ; take to Him the trouble, whatever it be, and tell it out to Him. Open thy heart, though to Him it is always open ; seek Him as thou wouldst a confidant, a bosom friend. Nor in that hour of distress be deterred by any of those horrible suggestions, that the Lord is not as one of ourselves, but like the false gods of the heathen, unable to see, hear, or speak. We men can think and feel ; we have eyes, ears, and tongues, and can use them ; as intelligent and efficient personal agents, we are vastly the superiors of any unintelligent force,

though that force were strong enough to jar the universe to its centre, to move the earth, and to carry the hills into the midst of the sea. If God could not do, at least, as much as we can do, then were we greater than God ; a personal, living man must be the superior of a mute, blind agency, call it by what sounding name you will. Let no such thoughts disturb you ; believe not one word of this veneered old falsehood, this patched-up revival of an ancient folly ; but look to God relying on His description of Himself, and go to Him as a child to the father, as a disciple to the Master ; and show Him what distresses your soul. This is to cast one's burden on the Lord ; or rather it is the way to begin. And next you must take God's help, as He sees fit to give it : if He be the physician, let Him prescribe the means of the cure ; do what He directs, be guided exactly by His word. It is a double act, of faith, and of obedience ; and in fulfilling it exactly is the certain road to peace.

Dear brethren : half the sorrow of our lives would be turned to joy, and the rest would be assuaged, did we but believe and act on the belief that our God is an ever present help in trouble. It is the beginning and the end, the substance and the sum of our religion in its personal application, that God is near to every one of us, that in Him we live and move and have our being, that He knows perfectly everything that concerns us. Every man has his burden to bear ; every heart knoweth its own bitterness. But what we know, God also knows ; and of

all that wend their way through this troubled world, not one but is seen of the Father; and of all the hearts that ever ached, or shall hereafter ache, not one aches uncared-for; nor is any sufferer overlooked, nor does any one drink, unnoticed, the cup of bitterness. There are no terms strong enough to state our conviction, that, as a literal fact, the Lord knows and numbers the very hairs of our heads; that He is most intimately acquainted with every human sorrow; that He sees every tear that falls, and hears even the lowest moan of distress; that He weighs, counts, and measures, and recollects; that when we are in our trial, He observes how we take it; that when we are under pressure, He marks how we endure; that He is near us from the beginning to the end; with little children, understanding their child-sorrows, even when by their own parents they are misunderstood; with the young in their buoyant days, and later when disenchantment comes and ideals fade away; with the ripe in years, who measure their strength against the great storms of maturity; and with us in the latter time, when the prospect saddens, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out. There are those to whom this faith of ours is foolishness; but observe what they say, and you will find that they have never given you anything in its place; they never will: they cannot, for there is nothing else to give. Thou hast thy burden, of necessity or want, of hard work and dull hours bringing little or no good, of anxiety about others or fears for thyself; of buried hope or affections

wasted on unworthy objects ; of spiritual dryness, or lack of earnest faith ; of longing for the unattainable or regret for the irreparable : whatever it be, bring that sorrow straight to thy God, with the conviction that it is the only rational and sensible thing to do, that all other expedients are vain, that there is no help in the world, or in any child of man, or anywhere out of Him ; and surely the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain, and thou shalt find in the Lord a comfort not to be had apart from Him, though one should seek it in height or depth, or in paths which no foot as yet hath trodden, or in the uttermost parts of the sea.

SERMON XVII.

PATIENCE.

2 THESS. III. 5.

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

ONE who had never thought of it before, might be amazed at discovering how often the word “patience” occurs in the Bible; with the force almost of a revelation might the fact break upon his mind. Patience! It seems to be referred to on every page of God’s written word; it is the inner habit of His people. Men speak of it to one another: they whisper it to their own hearts; it is, as one has said, like the wail of the Vox Humana, the perpetual cry of the soul, as if this life were but one long waiting, one long repression, a schooling in the way to endure and to hope. This word is found through the Bible, everywhere, excepting in one section, where notably it is absent, as I shall presently show; nor is it the voice of this life only, for behind the veil, in that place where the souls under the altar cry to God, the tone is still the same, “How long, how long, O Lord, faithful and true?” * And as this human voice calls evermore

goes forth ever, this plaintive sound, full of repression, resignation, diligent schooling how to suffer, till at length we hear it merging into the deep requiem of eternal peace. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors." *

What then is this, whereof such marvellous things are spoken? Take heed to distinguish it from all similes, from all faint reflections of itself. Everything in us depends on motive. It is not the question merely what we do; but why we do it, and for what end. Men live their life, on a higher or a lower plane, according to the aim which directs their action. There is a natural world, there is a divine world; a world wherein men do and endure, merely as the creatures of a brief dark day, early hastening to its death in the night of the past; a world where men move, and play their part, as children of God and heirs of immortality. It is motive, it is purpose, that lifts from the lower to the higher life. What is below, is the dull trace of that which is above: what is in the upper sphere is the perfect realization of imperfection beneath. Christian virtues are fruits of God's grace; they are but natural virtues ennobled by the touch of the Hand of God. And thus it is with patience.

* Rev. xiv. 12, 13.

There is a patience which is mere enduring, mere mute, uncomplaining submission. But in religion, patience is far more than that. I take, from the first of our living theologians, his wonderful definition ; let it sink into your minds and remain there evermore. "Patience," saith he, "is the endurance of any evil, out of the love of God, as the will of God." * That is the full meaning of the word ; that is the mark of His children ; it is this which calms the storms in the soul, which refines and purifies, which brings peace in life and rest beyond, which makes men like Christ, and ensures to them the crown hereafter. "Patience is the endurance of any evil out of the love of God, as the will of God."

But now, since this is a Christian virtue, involving conquest over self, and leading those who practice it, step by step, in the path which the Lord's saints have trodden, shall we think of it as too high for the ordinary daily life ? We are always making that mistake about Religion. We separate it from our common experiences ; we do not apply it to little things. We put it aside for one day in the week, we reserve it for stated occasions. That is wrong. Religion must influence the entire life ; otherwise it fails. Be sure of this : that you cannot rise to what you ought to be in great things, unless you practice in small matters. It is eminently so, in the case of this virtue of patience. You have it not : because

* Pusey's Parochial Sermons, vol. II., on Patience. This was written before he passed into the rest of the Saints.

you do not strive after it day by day, and hour by hour. You have it, and are collected and calm : it is because you have disciplined yourself in things so little that an ordinary mind would give them no second thought. But that is the way to prove our sincerity : the only way to gain and grow. From little daily matters, from petty trials, by the endurance of what you feel ashamed that you think of seriously, are you to grow to the likeness of the saints, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Patience is the endurance of *any* evil. How small are most evils ! How rarely come the great ones ! No hour in the day without its foolish little trial ; but everything turns on how you bear yourself there ; so only shall you be fitted to stand without flinching when the mighty battles must be fought.

What then is the field on which you are to be taught the sublime lesson of the Master ? Find it in your own house ; in your own heart ; where you meet with others ; when you are alone with your restless thoughts. Do I know all about this ? Yes ; we all know ; and none needs to tell another. When you cry, " I am out of patience ; that person, or that thing, puts me out of all patience ; I cannot bear it longer : " you know then what this virtue is ; you know because you miss it in yourself, and are vexed and upset in consequence. Think what a multitude of trials we have to go through, and what a strain is put on human patience day after day : thus shall you see what opportunities are constant-

ly afforded to practice loving acquiescence in God's will. There are sickness and pain; need and want; poverty, or the uneasiness which haunts the prosperous in this world; thwarted wishes, and hopes deferred; chronic ill health, with the inability to do what we see other persons doing. In one's house, no day but some little thing goes wrong; some vexatious person offends, some blunder is made, some little accident happens. Even in the aspect of the skies we find our trial; it rains when we wish it were clear; it is too hot, it is too cold; nothing is precisely as we would have it. And, O! the trouble we have with other people! How trying they are, as if, by some intuition, they knew the very way to annoy us, till it seems more than human nature can endure, and you lose patience, perhaps your temper, and break out into reproaches. I know how you feel; how aggravating some things are; how fearfully wearing on the spirits day after day; and some have special trials, so terrible that even strangers might pronounce it intolerable, and express their indignation. There are posts in life where people need infinite patience; and work which without it must come to naught. Think of the patience of the parent with an ungrateful and rebellious child; of the teacher with a dull scholar; of the wife with a husband, who tries her where trial is torture; of the pastor with some giddy, headstrong person, whom nothing will retain in the path of duty. Do you think these things small and of

slight importance? The minor trials of life, the home and household worries, the things that provoke an excitable disposition, are they then insignificant? You are in error; these are the very matters through which you may become as the saints, as Christ. In these are you on trial, everywhere and all the time; rising up and lying down, going out and coming in, with your family and friends, and by yourself. If you can say, of any one thing that befalls you, "this is an evil, I would that this were not so;" remember our definition: patience is the endurance of just such evils, be they small or great, out of the love of God, and because it is the will of God.

Yes; begin there, practice there, and persevere; and from that narrow field may you reap a full harvest of spiritual fruit. Each little conquest in each simple thing will help you on the way; he that is faithful in the least will be faithful also in the greatest; the power to grapple with giants and throw them must be gained in what looks like playing at wrestling with pigmies, children and fools. And if God has not yet taught you, and you have this secret to learn, the secret of calm submission, delay not, lest the time be too short for the lesson. What a schooling it is, that of our life! Filled with broken hopes, with disappointments, with the relics of what has come to naught, one thing it might do for you; it might make you that rare character over which angels rejoice. It is passing away, fast as the years depart, one by one; lose not these golden moments; but ask that in them you may learn

that art of walking humbly with your God. But you will ask: how shall I learn that divine art? We answer, patience is a special gift of grace. So much is intimated by the Apostle: "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." What is the characteristic sign? to bear all things, not with animal courage, not with iron resolve, not with that mere pagan fortitude, which is a natural virtue only, and which the world applauds, but *out of the love of God*. Other remedies for the varied ills of life are human remedies; they are like the nostrums of the quack and the charlatan; they make no thorough cure; they bring not back to health. This one divine remedy is to bear evil for the love of God. It is the sign of Divine Charity. "She suffereth long, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." * The root of virtues is the supreme love of God; it is the love of God that worketh loveliness in any human spirit; where the life is unlovely, one thing must be lacking—the love of God. Try to feel this in a simple, practical way.

Even in little trials, that Love of God is proving you; it is as truly an act of religion, to check yourself in angry words, to keep your temper, to give a gentle answer when some one torments you in waywardness or malice, as to go to the Church, and approach the Table of the Lord: try to act lovingly and patiently towards others, because you know that God loveth them also. That is

* I Cor. xiii. 4-7.

the only way to reap the harvest of the sour, chill field, the only way to draw their sting from the minor vexations of life.

But you may ask whether this be possible to bear, to endure in silence, without complaint? Does not the vexed soul demand relief? Is there not a cry in the heart which must make itself heard? We know the danger of repression; it brings on outbreaks and explosions; it betides mischief, sudden and terrible, if there be no safety valve, no escape for surplus force. It is so, with men; just as much so with God's patient servants, as with machinery, or mobs. What is in the troubled heart must make an utterance for itself. Patience is not inconsistent with complaint. That perpetual repression which marks the noble character, which underlies the Bible exhortations to patience, which seems the habit of the souls most dear to God, involves complaint, protest the wish to be released, and forever free. But what form shall this complaint take? To whom may the patient spirit complain? Of what may it complain? Listen to the Psalmist: "When my heart is vexed I will complain:" not *of* God, but *unto* God. Cry to the Almighty, yet not as murmuring against His dispensations, nor as rebelling against His will, nor as angrily criticising His Providences, but cry to Him because He is our Father, because He loves us, because He knows all, because, when things seem strange and perplexing to us, it is a comfort to know that to Him all is clear. It is not a bitter voice,

nor querulous, nor ill-tempered ; it is the long wailing cry of devout souls that wait His time, certain that it must come. "I will complain unto my God ;" never of Him, but to Him, if you wish, every day. It is one thing to sorrow after a godly fashion, and another to sorrow after the way of the world ; one is the sorrow of morose displeasure, of resentful, bitter disgust ; the other the loving, weary wish for rest, when, and as God wills, that rest shall come. And this gives to patience, as we hear the word everywhere in the Holy Bible, that strange character, so touching, so tender ; the submission to the higher will, the hope in the higher power ; the resolve to bring every sorrow to Him and then to bide our time, and never give the adversary occasion to accuse us unto the Lord. This is sublime, for it shows a conviction which nothing can shake, that God is able to set everything right ; that if He does not, it can only be because He deems it best for us that things should remain as they are yet a little while longer ; that we must not hurry Him ; that we know how mighty and overwhelming shall be our joy, when we come to the end of these wonders, and see that all He did was done well.

I said, before, that this word, patience, is woven into the whole texture of the Sacred Books, except in one section. Let me speak of this in conclusion. It is scarcely to be found in the four gospels. Not once does the word occur in St. John ; not once in St. Mark ; not once, in the sense in which we use it, in St. Matthew ;

twice in St. Luke, but there only once, by way of exhortation, where the Lord said, "In your patience possess ye your souls." * Why should this be? Perhaps, because he needs no exhortation to patience, who studies the life of Christ. For Christ was patience itself; in Him patience had her perfect work; of all examples of the virtue none ever came up to that. But another reason may be imagined, who needed to be patient while Christ was in the world? His presence was the fulness of joy, and at His Right Hand was pleasure for evermore. Not while He was with them in the flesh, did they need homily or counsel to be patient, who, in having Christ Himself, had all. And so He said: "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." † And so it was; after He departed, began the watch for His return; and as that return was delayed, patience became the sign of the faithful. It has ever been so; it shall be so till the end. Patience is, and must ever be, in such a world as this, the special mark of the believer: it is the twin sister of Faith, the habit of those who are strangers here, and declare, by their life, that they seek a country and a home beyond. It was so before Christ; it is so now. It was one long waiting from the hour of the Fall till the night of the Nativity, while they that loved God were hoping and patiently looking for the Redeemer. Since that day

* St. Luke xxi. 19.

† St. Matt. ix. 15.

it is ever the same ; the Holy Ghost directs our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. Nor is it so among the living only ; it is thus also with the dead ; wheresoever they are sleeping, in the dust of the earth, or under desert sands, or beneath the blue water, their bones expect the resurrection ; it is even thus behind the veil, where the souls of the departed call on God the Lord to hasten His Kingdom. Think it no hardship, then, to wait and watch, but rather think of the joy that is set before you, in the second advent of the Lord. To those whom that great vision holds firm with a controlling power, each day is counted gain, because it brings them nearer to the triumph of the Redeemer in whom they trust. What in this world can much disturb them ? Those little ills of life ; the hurt and harm, the annoyance and affront, harsh words, misunderstandings, vexations ; these are but bubbles on the tide, light foam upon the current ; they vanish and are forgotten ; they can make no permanent impression on a soul that is fixed on God, that sees Him in every event ; that is able to read in the universe the prophecy of the coming of the Kingdom. “ Patience wins all,” said St. Theresa ; it was her favorite maxim, her daily and hourly faith ; it made her noble life what it was. And to her was it said long since, “ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, therefore be numbered with my saints in glory everlasting.” Would you be as one of them ? Persevere a little ; and to the long advent of this present life shall succeed

the morning of God ; and to your ears shall come the triumphant Glorias of victory, and instead of the wailing cry you shall hear the Tersanctus around the throne, and so shall you find, at last, the reward of keeping still silence and waiting for the time of your redemption.

SERMON XVIII.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

ST. MATTHEW XXII. II.

“ And when the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.”

EACH of the parables of our Blessed Lord is a mine of richest ore ; we go to it, and take a little thence, and again and again we return, unable to exhaust the treasure. Thus from this parable of the great wedding feast, let us select one single expression. The Wedding Garment : what is it ? by whom is it made ? and how and when, and at what hour shall it be needed ? and what shall be the doom of him who has it not ?

• Old stories and strange chronicles of other days come into the thoughts as we listen to the words of Christ. For instance, they tell us of one who sat, day after day, in her fair house, past which a strong river flowed toward the sea, and she ever wove and wove, and never looked up, nor heeded aught beyond that task ; till, on one fatal day, there came by a vision of the pride and beauty of this world : then she looked up, and left her work, and was lost and undone. And so may it be in

many a life: there is work for us to do, and do it we must; here is a garment to be woven, and God has told us what is coming, and has set us at the task, here beside the great river of time, which shall become for each, ere long, the river of death. What are we at? Are our hearts in the task? Or are the eyes wandering, and is the thing like to be left forever undone?

The parable relates to the end of the world. The joys of heaven, unspeakable and full of glory, are typified under the figure of a marriage feast, of all earthly festivities the brightest. God hath prepared such good things as no thought can attain; but the preparation is not made for all without distinction; it is for them that love Him; * not for the ungodly and base, not for dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers, not for murderers and idolaters, not for those who love and make a lie. † Under the figure of a pure, sweet bridal, we learn of the eternal marriage of the blessed ones to Christ, of the mystical marriage of Christ and the Church. ‡ For this, each is to make ready: for this is the wedding garment needed: and now and here must it be made, and each must make his own with his own hands.

What then is this marvellous dress? To clear our thoughts, let us first decide what it is not; and to that end let us reflect on the purposes which apparel has been made to serve.

Among those purposes a chief one is this: the garb is

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Rev. xxii. 15.

‡ Ephes. v. 23.

used to adorn the person. Personal vanity is notably served that way. Man, in all conditions, from the barbarous to the most enlightened, is prone to minister to his pride by decking himself in such array as to attract attention and admiration. It is the fault of most persons ; the curse of not a few, who, first through the love of dress and finery, have been led, step by step, to horrible sin. The Wedding Garment which God requires in Holy Scripture is not of this quality. Whatever it be, it is not a robe of pride to dress up a sinner.

Next, there is this use in dress, that it hides defects and deformities, and makes us seem to be other and better than we are. There are garments, which amount essentially to a falsehood and a cheat ; what is beneath them one would hide ; their office is to conceal, and so concealing, to mislead. On some miserable frame, some anatomy of dishonor and infirmity, art piles her lying paraphernalia, covering up earth and ashes with that fraudulent cloak ; and often, when crimes are to be committed, or justice is to be evaded, men seek disguises as aids to the design. But the Wedding Garment is not akin to these. It is not a masquerade dress put on to try and deceive the Lord ; such antics as men and women play here, must cease when the King cometh in to see the guests, and each shall stand for what he is, for that, justly, and for no more.

And thirdly, dress is for the outer man only ; it tells nothing of the inner man. The body is one thing, the soul

and spirit another. Under the habit of the priest, a secular and worldly heart may beat; a man may wear the garb of the soldier, yet have the temper of a craven; or clad in the robe of royalty, he may be as humble-minded as a child. Men are wolves in sheep's clothing, and rough-looking figures may hide a marvellous wealth of tenderness and sympathy. But again, of the Wedding Garment we must say, that it differs in this respect from the fabrics of earthly looms; it is more than an outer dress, as we shall see, when we go on, as next in order, to define what this wonderful thing really is.

The Wedding Garment, then, is essentially a habit of holiness and righteousness. It differs, specifically, from those vanities in which we take so much delight, in three respects: first, in that it is a clothing of humility; secondly, it truly corresponds to what the wearer is; and thirdly, it is a habit of the inner as well as of the outer man. It is no robe of pride, but the drapery of those who are meek and lowly in heart, poor in spirit, pure before God. It is no mask or domino, disguising the idle reveller or the stealthy conspirator, but a vestment of simplicity, honesty and truth. It is a dress of the soul, the every-day costume of the devout and religious spirit, the inner habit which goes together with the outer, orderly and sober life.

Such, then, is this dress which the Lord will look for in every one of us: and now as to the maker and the materials. It must be woven by our own hands, if ever

woven at all. There is no such thing as getting that garment made for you, not if you were to offer all you possess on earth in exchange for it. Every man is his own artisan : there are no workshops, and no workmen here, or elsewhere, to fit for heaven the souls of those who will not make themselves ready. We can buy, according to our means, sufficient, or more than sufficient, of lavish or gorgeous apparel, for this world and this life ; but not one thread or one finger's breadth of that which we need for the Life to come : no human intercession, no saintly prayer, no oblation of others, can help him who will not help himself in this thing. *Not* even Christ can furnish us with the robe of righteousness, unless we work together with Him.

For the materials are from God. They are the redeeming work of our Saviour, His perfect righteousness, His absolute holiness, His merits, the benefits of His cross and passion, His mighty resurrection and glorious ascension : these are the material whereof the dress must be made. But like other material, they cannot and will not make themselves into a garment ; skilled and industrious fingers are needed for that ; and the fingers are those of faith, hope and love. We must lay hold of the material afforded us in the life of Christ, and of this must we make a garment ; not, as was said before, a robe of pride, to puff us up with conceited thoughts, as if we were the favored of heaven and holier than our brethren ; not a mockery of a dress, hiding the hypocri-

sies and unrealities of an evil life under a Christian profession ; not a mere outward uniform of Churchmanship, to which nothing in our soul corresponds : but we must weave us a true Christian habit by Christian acts ; we must take what the Lord has done for us, and of it we must work a holy life ; we must become like Him. And in all this we shall have His help if we work hard ; and if we do not work, we shall have no help. In the manufacture of the Wedding Garment, two elements come in, the human and the divine. “Work out your own salvation,” saith the apostle,” for it is God that worketh in you.” And so may we say of the Wedding Garment : “work at it hard, for no one can make it for you ; work your work cheerily, for God works with you ; and between Him and yourself doubt not that all shall be done well.”

Surely such encouragement as this is needed ; for our work is most imperfect. But if we do our best, God will supply its defects and make it good ; sufficient for every need. Such garment as the child of God tries to make, in accordance with God’s will, may need much altering and setting right ; it shall need to be shaped, and washed and made white, till it become that radiant dress which the King shall see with pleasure. Leave that to others : do thy best, and thy work shall be made a perfect work by One who has all perfection in His eternal state.

Plainly, then, and laying aside the figure, to weave the

Wedding Garment is to make due preparation for the world to come. It is to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present place of sojourn. It is to study to be and remain good Christians; to love mercy, to do justly, and to walk humbly with our God. It is to lay hold on Christ by faith; so that His righteousness may work the forgiveness of all our sins and that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord; it is to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. And this must we do here and now; by the banks of the solemn river of life, whose waters flow on and on; not looking away, nor desisting from our Christian duty, nor drawn off by the vanity of the world, but looking for the life of the world to come.

How many, think you, are thus steadily and faithfully doing their work and making them ready? Let us look about the world and see. It is a busy scene. Here be myriads of weavers, all intent and industrious: but of them all how many are working to no profit, and how many are throwing their time and their talents away!

First, there are many who never think of the marriage feast at all, much less of the Wedding Garment. They are as indifferent to the future as if there were none. Or, if they have any faith, so much as yet to believe that there is a God and that they must some day meet Him, they think to rush unprepared into His Presence, as if there were nothing to fear. Of such the doom has been distinctly told in the case of him, who so appeared before

the King: he was led away and thrust forth into the night.

There are others, who, perchance, after working some time at the robe of righteousness, grew tired of their task and threw it aside. They who were once, in earlier days, quiet, conscientious, and religious, have lost all that. Something showy and splendid, out of the world, has flashed, with glory, into their life; they have looked up, they have followed the sheen of pride and vanity; they have forgotten the old dress of the child of Christ, at which the gay and flighty laugh, calling it stiff, prim, and antiquated; and now their taste is for the gaudy garb of time, stiff with embroideries and ablaze with jewels. They have left their first love and have taken up with the new; and, perhaps, the work, which they began and left off will never be taken up again: and what will they do in the end thereof?

Once more: there be those, whom life hardens instead of softening. They make to themselves coats of mail, out of their infidelity and their stoicism, and in these they clank about, cold and stiff, shutting out God from them, and shutting themselves in that impenetrable casing of selfishness, inside of which faith, hope, and love die. Such garb as this can be polished, enamelled, engraved, and made to shine wonderfully; but if a man die therein, he will never get out of it; the thing itself shall turn to rust, and within it shall be but a shackling skeleton, and the earth, with her bars, shall be about the low and earthly

soul forever; And here be some, again, who dress as harlequins, and skip about all their days, restless and excitable, children of merriment merely, without any mission in the world, and taking no part in its serious work; and others, who clothe themselves with cursing like as with a raiment; and others, yet again, who make sackcloth their garment, and are forever murmuring and complaining, dissatisfied in every particular with that state of life in which it hath pleased the Lord to call them. On these things, when we look, we are naturally led to ask ourselves where we come in, what is our place here in this wide scene, whether we are seriously and earnestly at work in our preparation for what lies in front and at no great distance away, or whether we too have been bewitched by the spirit of the world, and led away from the things which belong to our peace. One of two things is true of every one present; either he is or he is not making ready; and then there comes another and a very ominous reflection; for if any one be *not* making the Wedding Garment for the marriage supper of the Lamb, he must be at work on his grave dress, and the work of his life, or the idle inactivity, or the restless frivolity of his career, is going, simply and merely, into the manufacture of a Shroud.

Must it not be so? Look through the outward, into the inward; look at things in their relation to the ultimate tests and standards of all, and say, what is the end of human glory, of human pride and state, when unblessed by God and religion, but the grave? And of all out-

ward symbols and presentments of humanity, ever since the days of innocence, ever since the hour when mortals sinned and knew that they were naked, and hid from God, what is there so marked, so conspicuous, so prominent in mortal man as that outward vesting and cover wherewith he strives to hide his misery and shame? And as for our souls, have they not also their own wretchedness; and as for our life is it not also vile in God's sight? With what shall we be ready to hide our sins and transgressions from the all-seeing eye? And what shall God do with us, if we do not even make an effort to prepare to meet Him? If we love not the heavenly robe, what have we left? If the garment of the kingdom be not unto us a covering at the last, what shall be left but such poor drapery as this world can supply, and what can that do for us at last except to dress these mortal relics for the sepulchre? Through the world, in all its quarters, ring strong voices of judgment, knelling on the earth the decay of all that is not made alive in Christ; "Man as a rotten thing consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten." * "Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth eaten." † Such things as we love best must soon and early fade before the moth, and if we have not wherewithal to appear in the presence of the Lord, we can but hide our own misery in the dust wherein the talent has lain buried.

Let us not be deceived by any show that this brave

* Job xiii. 28.

† James v. 2.

but empty world can make. The gala of an ungodly life is nothing else save a kind of animated lying-in-state. When kings or great men die, they take their bodies, and dress them in their best, and men press forward to view the solemn display. Velvet and gold, with stars and crowns, and rarest flowers; lights burning softly, and the rich swell of divine music; all these make up the pageant; but it means, this only, that the man is dead. Even so, let us see the proud and the fair, the learned and the honorable, the youth and beauty, the strength and excellency of this world, assembled together and arrayed in whatsoever of rich and rare the art of man can furnish; yet, if the spirit of Christ be not moving through that congregation of mortals, and if they have not likewise the robe of His merits and His righteousness about them, the scene looks, to the eye of wisdom, and must look to the eyes of higher intelligences, like a masquerade of death. It is as if men and women were dressed before for burial, and were walking to and fro in the finery of their last display, ere yet the passing-bell had sounded, and ere yet the time to chant the *De Profundis* had come.

On this scene of disguises and untruths, of strivings after effect, of forced display, of aiming at keeping up appearances in a world whose hollowness is more than suspected, and of winning praise from mortals whose houses fade before the moth: on this stupendous scene, presented by a dissolving world, the reality at last shall

break; and everything shall stand forth for what it is, for that, and only that, with the Coming of the King. Observe, that all is to go as it is going, until the end. The wheat and the tares must grow together; no hand may separate them as yet. Men and women shall wend about, as now, in such garb as they prefer to wear, or their several stations in life suggest; and none can change this, and no public and general enquiry shall be made, until the awful hour of the coming of the King. "When the King came in to see the guests," then was the signal for confusion and dismay. Mark well that stately entrance, for surely every eye in this assemblage must behold it. See how He draweth nigh, who is absolute purity, perfect righteousness, unclouded splendor, shining forth at last, like the sun through the cloud and mist of a heavy morning, and think how we shall stand when He appeareth? Why should not fitting garb be needed? Why should not the tinsel, the finery, and the sorry vestures of an unblessed mortality shrivel in the light which is to come with that coming of the King? Remember that hour; and what we then *must* have. Some have thought it harsh, that one who had no wedding garment should have been cast forth to shame and eternal darkness for the lack of it. But there is no injustice in God. The robe which we shall need is offered to us all; it is offered to us freely; we have no money price to pay for that robe of the righteousness of Christ; so many

souls of men as there be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, so many are the garments prepared for them in the great vestries and robing rooms of heaven. And surely as ye have been called to be Christians and bidden to the heavenly banquet, so surely was your wedding garment once given to you. Where is it now? What have you done with it? Have you defiled it, or bartered it for something that you thought more desirable, or torn it to pieces in wild excitement, amid the reckless and the gay, or lost it in some by-path of sin? That is your fault; charge it not to your Lord.

As day by day we clothe ourselves for the duties of our life, let us think of the robe of Christ, and lifting the heart to Him, let us secretly pray that it be given to us, of His mercy and pity, lest lacking it we be found naked and destitute. If men and women would give to this but a tenth part of the thought they give to adorning and arraying themselves, they might avert the peril which Christ's words disclose. Let us remember that man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord on the heart. After all, this Wedding Garment is a dress of the soul: it is the reflection of the glory of the Lord in the hearts and lives of those who love Him and keep His sayings: and when the King comes in, such servants as these shall seem to be clad in Christ Himself; He shall be to them as a vesture and a dress of perpetual light; and to them shall it be said, Blessed are they that have watched, and have

kept their garments; Blessed are they that have made them white as sunshine in the blood of the Lamb; Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, for they shall live and shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever.

SERMON XIX.

THE CHILD OF PROMISE.

GENESIS XVII. 18.

“And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee !”

WHEN the promise came to Abraham that a son, Isaac by name, should be born to him, he was not a childless man. Thirteen years before had he rejoiced at the birth of Ishmael, and for those thirteen years had the son of Hagar the bondwoman held possession of the father's mind and thought : he was the first-born of the house, and to him did the right and dignity belong. But at length the word came to Abraham which at once enriched and despoiled him. God taketh away one, and setteth up another ; and this promise of another son, was, to the father, for loss and for gain. The first must be last, and the last first. With the entrance of Isaac on the scene, must come that word of doom, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son : for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” There are traces, not obscure, of the fact, that the tidings were not altogether welcome. Some promises have in them a

savor of discipline and judgment. No man gives up gladly what he has grown to love ; nor, though the light in the front shine brightly, do the present and the past lose instantly their special charm ; something indefinite and unfulfilled can hardly make up, at once, for a present which we comprehend and enjoy. What was the thought of Abraham, we can but conjecture ; yet who does not perceive a deep emotion in that earnest prayer, almost a deprecation, " O that Ishmael might live before thee ! " He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Yet is there not in every real act of faith, a sacrifice ? Joy and peace come of believing ; yet these are born of pain ; for while, through faith, a better hope is born, some lower hope, some inferior and less worthy love must die, before the better and higher may live ; and death is, essentially, an agony. The words on which we are dwelling may, perhaps, have marked a crisis in the trial of Abraham. He thought on what he had heard, and gave glory to God ; but not without a longing, lingering gaze on a day which was substantially at an end. He thought of the lad who had been with him thirteen years ; of the child that had learned to speak to him and say, " Abba, Father ; " of the little hand which had clasped his own as they walked together : of the morning brightness and the evening calm, and the care of God ; he recalled the beautiful Egyptian, Sarai's maid, and her heavy grief ; the oppression, the flight, the trials and sorrows which knit heart to heart and bind us

together with the scarlet line of suffering. And now the end was coming to joy and pain alike. The first-born must be expelled from his place ; the child of the heart must leave the heart, or abide there a memory only and no more a living presence ; times were to change ; another face, another figure must appear, and Hagar and Ishmael must become like the dreams of a day forever fled. It comports not with the affectionate heart of man to meet such a trial without emotion. It were not unnatural to desire that it might not have been altogether thus ; that the promise might not have cost so dear ; and perhaps the meditation of the troubled patriarch might have taken some such form as this : “ O that it had been Ishmael in whom God’s word should be accomplished ! O that I could have kept this well-beloved child ! O that the sacrifice were less, that the cup of blessing were not thus tinctured with the sharp and pungent myrrh ! ” Such a conjecture does God’s great servant no wrong. The faith which triumphs is made perfect through suffering. The backward look was but for a moment : then the grave eyes turned to the front, and after that looked not away.

Now that we have thus briefly mused of this wish, this sorrowful sighing or this prayer (whatsoever it was, God knoweth), let us make of it a little allegory, applicable to our own lives ; for there is that in human life which corresponds to it. By allegory is meant “ a figurative representation, in which the words, signs, or forms signify something beyond their literal and obvious mean-

ing." Let us take up this narrative in the full assurance that we shall find in it what answers to our own spiritual experience. "The word is nigh thee," of a truth. The old man; the child of his heart, first, and to nature, dearest; the new child of promise, for whom the elder must be given up; these are our teachers; they are the images of something in our own life. Their forms cast long shadows out into the world; like the spectre shadows on the Brocken, they loom, vast and silent, across the cloudy rack of time; God's servants recognize the shapes, and can tell us what they mean.

Ishmael was born after the flesh; and he was first in order, as being born "of blood, and of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man." "The first man is of the earth, earthy. For that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." He was, nevertheless, a gift of God, and, perhaps a gift of faith; but he was not the one to whom the promise was made. Ishmael, therefore, stands for the promise of this earth, of the world, and of this present life. I do not mean that he represents our sin, nor those evil passions which haunt and afflict us, nor the low, gross life of carnal men: for Abraham, his father, was a man of faith and a servant of righteousness before Ishmael was born; but he stands for the fair good promise of this earth, before a better thing is born in the soul. While the world lasts, it is the gift of God; for He created it, and "the earth is the Lord's and the

fulness thereof." Our desire for it, our love of it, our pleasure in it, are natural, and would not be subject to reproof, had we never known of another state and a higher life. And there is a time, in the history of God's servants, when they might fairly be likened to Abraham, content in Ishmael, and devoted to that child which Hagar bare to him. What Ishmael was to his father, such was once, to many a man and woman now consciously and resolutely alive in Christ, the first and native wish and passion of the undisciplined will, the first love of the mere wordly life. The child of the heart was there, beloved, and to all appearance, secure, yea, moreover, sufficient to every desire and wish. The thirteen years had established that dominion; and in the still possession of that dear object of a natural desire, the conscience had grown torpid, and the earlier hours of life had slipped away.

Consider if it be not so. For a long time, before there arises in the soul a great desire for God, which nothing less than God can appease, men and women are content with something less than that which is to be. Perhaps, if left to themselves, they would never desire a change. It is a marvellous thing, for some of us, to look back, and see how they once lived; on what a low plane, with what a contracted horizon; and how well it seemed with them meanwhile. See how some lesser, lower love will work its way up, from small beginnings to complete control, and how sweetly the soul will feed on its own idol

which itself hath made, asking for nothing better. What is at first no more than a mere vague sentiment, will flutter and feebly move in the fancy and the imagination; then, for a time, it slumbers in its hiding place, latent, yet living; by and-by it will bestir itself, and more and more; and again and again doth it give indication of its presence, until that presence becomes an abiding consciousness. Then it grows, and waxes strong, until the sentiment becomes a well defined desire, and the desire a passion. If such a passion confer delight, by its presence with us, as may be the case, then shall we find our daily pleasure in its society, and it will come to be, at length, a part of our life. The history of many a life, perhaps the history of every life led apart from God, is this: that some prevailing tendency, some dominant motive, exists there, having the influence and gentle lordship of a child of the heart, the offspring of the desire and will. It is companionship and society: it is with the man whether he wake or sleep. He remembers it, at the dawning of the day, when consciousness returns: he finds pleasure in it, while going forth to his work and to his labor, until the evening, when, still faithful, it attends him to the place of his rest, and, perchance, may smile upon him through his dreams. There are those of us who have such inseparable companions in their strong desires, their high ambitions, their set resolves; whose very existence becomes an act of worship of those offspring of the heart; who take delight in the nurture, the training up, the development of

thoughts, plans, schemes, visions to which it is the fancy that gives what substance they possess. Let us open our hearts one to another ; let us confess our thoughts one to another. So many hearts as there are, so many of these children of the heart may be found, nestling within them, and ministering to their contentment and delectation. It is Ishmael, whom Abraham has found in his old age ; whom he would keep with him all his days, so long as the pilgrimage may last. Yet, after all, this is " of the earth, earthy ;" there is no promise in the eyes of this child, beyond the promise of a transitory world.

Yet this is not the worst of it. Let us look to the end. Of offspring thus engendered, naught can come but anxiety, pain, and distress. Ishmael's pedigree was fated and banned from the very first ; it is so, with every thing that springeth out of the human heart without the prominent grace of God. Ishmael was born of a passion and a despair, of a wild suggestion, and a recklessness in taking into human hands what God, for good reasons, meant to keep in His own. And he grew, accordingly, to be a wild, fierce man ; and the temper of the man was, no doubt, traceable in the boy. It is so with the children of our own hearts ; they are wild and restless ; they are born of our desire and will ; therefore are they hard to govern and apt to lawless deeds. They lead us away ; they hurry us forward ; they remove our soul far off from peace ; and, under their influence, we become unsettled and unfit for honest work. Whenever a man permits

some one desire to get the better of him, or at least, to exert a wide and general influence over his actions ; and when he finds, as the result, that he is growing nervous and uneasy, that a feverish solicitude pervades his thoughts, that he frets himself continually, that the dignity of a well-balanced character is slipping from him ; or else, when it is come to this, that he feels as if with one deep draught of that soul-desire, every day, he could be content to live on here, interminably ; or when, for the want of such gratification, the day is tedious, and the hours are long, and hunger and thirst grow and burn within ; when signs like these appear, he must be blind indeed who cannot read the story of his life ; who knows not that he is fast in the world's net ; that another Lord besides his own has dominion over him ; that the fierce and untamed Ishmael is in his tent ; that his life is bound up in a temporal promise, and that he has ceased to care for the promise of the world to come.

So is it with you, who are not consciously and lovingly in Christ : and so was it once with you, who, now changed and altered from the pattern of your former selves, can yet look back upon days when you were wandering, and either thought wrongly, or thought not at all, of God. And here the allegory meets us once again, and shows the marvellous dealings of the Holy Ghost with the souls of those whom He brings forth and fixes in the Lord. As Ishmael represents the promise of the earth, so Isaac stands for the promise of heaven.

The new promise comes, not in the natural course of things, nor in the common order of this monotonous world, but in another way, known to God. Marked religious changes are sometimes the result of strange and bitter disappointment; but it is not always so. They often come, simply, of some word of the Lord, which carries a promise, and yet breaks in upon a repose in which we would fain have continued without even His most holy intrusion. Full often, the only explanation that a man can give, to himself or to others, of his course in turning round, and walking away from his old self, and on toward a new ideal, is this: "I could not help it; God spoke to me, and I had to go." It is not always in exultation, it is often in deep depression, that man lays hold of the promise, with the sorrowful cry, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" The object proposed is above this world, and beyond it; faith discerns, resignation accepts, the "old man" dies hard. Slowly and with reluctance hath many a one cast forth the bondwoman and her son, to give place to the intruder who "cometh in the name of the Lord." Think on it carefully, brethren, what true and proper sacrifice there is in this exchange of the lower for the higher hope; of a life which, though free from graver sins and gross vices, is yet *not* a practical Christian life. The promise of God is refined, spiritual, unworldly; it involves the banishment from the heart of that which has been perhaps its dearest treasure, the reconstruction of

the inner being, the remodelling of the life. Such things do not, of necessity, lift the soul to ecstasy on the mere representation; the opposite is often the case. A sudden impulse is the worst possible ground for action; it is that fact which casts discredit on revivalism, and justifies the suspicion of its unreality. For when, in a tide of semi-sensual gladness, and with a gush of devotional excitement, one turns (if it be really turning), from the world, and off at once to God, without an idea that it costs a man much to do it, and actually with a feeling of physical pleasure in the change; the chances are that this will prove a transient passion, and that, with the morrow, the effect of the stimulant will pass away. It should not be thus with reasonable men when they lay hold of the promises of God. Those promises are unearthly, distant, and somewhat shadowy; they are calculated, not to add a piquancy and zest to the banquet which we have already spread for ourselves, but to sweep all from the board and lay the table anew. They demand, on man's part, submission and resignation; they tell him that it is time to leave off playing with potty conceits, pretending, like children, that we are this or that, and fancying ourselves to be what it pleases us best to be; and that the hour has come to go to school, even to the rigorous school of Christ, where the disciple must wear a yoke, and bring under the body, and mortify the flesh; where men may not seek their own, nor mind earthly things, nor set up idols in their own hearts, but

bend themselves bravely to their duty, and let pleasure go for the time. Who can hear these things without trembling? Who can rebuke the rising wish that it might be otherwise? Who can wonder that men should try to keep as much of the old life as they can, when they attempt the higher life of grace? So Naaman asked leave to go occasionally into the house of Rimmon and bow down there, if it might be done without sin; and Abraham prayed that his first and well-beloved son might live before God; and a certain man, desirous, but not quite ready to follow Christ, would have permission to go and bury his father; and another said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." There is always some little thing, some last thing to do, when God calleth. It is of human nature and of human infirmity. It is better than to dash, hastily and heedlessly, forward. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore, let thy words be few." They serve Him best who are wary and discreet; who feel what His service costs, yet refuse not to pay the price of that great salvation.

Let us never shut the ear to the voice of the Holy Spirit, as it speaks to us in the stories of the past. Let

us try what we may learn, day by day, from those worthies of the earlier dispensation, who, even in this remote age, are apt to teach us by their example. Almighty God offers to each one of us an unworldly gift, and a treasure in the heavens. Now when this offer comes to you, there is little doubt that it will find you preoccupied with other things; there may be in your spiritual house, at the gate of which Christ stands knocking, some tenant whom you could hardly keep, were He to enter in, while you cannot bear the thought of turning him out to give place to the Lord. There is no doubt that to many a soul thus earnestly bidden to a higher life in Christ, a closer walk with God, there is some hindrance, some stumbling block in the way for which the man is responsible: a preoccupation in the business and care of the world, a desire, long cherished, for some earthly good, an ideal which shines so wondrously in unreal splendor, that it throws the greater things into shadow. Now, if this be so, do not wonder that there should come, when God calleth thee, a sense of regret, or even the suspicion of a rebellious opposition to His will; but rather expect it, and be prepared. Such emotions appertain to that weakness of ours in which His grace must be made perfect; and the victory is to be sought, by accepting what may look like a dubious favor and setting faith in its rightful lordship over sight. Then, if the trial seem too hard to bear, reflect once more upon the allegory: there is comfort in it, if you read it intelligently.

Ishmael lived. Though the covenant was established in Isaac, as the seed to whom the promise was made, yet God said, "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."* The meaning is clear. The natural gifts and blessings of God are not destroyed by His supernatural graces: they are remanded to their own place, allowed to work out their determined ends, to yield increase after their proper law. Even in a worldly point of view, it is better that a man embrace and cling to the heavenly promises; that he lay aside what he values most, that he be content to view at a distance, what once was too near his heart; these things may not be entirely lost to him. Nothing can be lost forever, which God's grace can hallow; the Son of Man cometh to save and not to destroy: and that, in us, which God saw and pronounced to be good, when He created us, may be refined in fire, purified, and made a part of our eternal treasure. If, in the case of any person, or object, this can be done, it shall be done by a love and a power accepting the act of voluntary sacrifice, and giving back tenfold what once was deliberately resigned according to His will. May the Holy Spirit teach us to repress the wild desires of the heart, and help us to walk by faith and no longer by sight: to hold no child

* Gen. xvii. 20.

of our own inspiration and imagining, no bosom desire, no bosom sin so closely, that He who died for us must turn away from our gate because another is immovably seated in the place which He, and He only, should have filled.

SERMON XX.

ST. PAUL.*

GALATIANS I. I.

“ Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.”

FEW facts are better known than this, that the Roman Catholic Church claims for St. Peter, the Apostle, a supremacy over Christendom, and what they call a privilege, entitling him to absolute rule and command in the Kingdom of God. To support this claim, it is alleged, that St. Peter was at Rome ; that he was first bishop of Rome ; that as bishop of Rome he was head over the whole Church ; that his successors in that office inherited that same universal primacy. With these allegations we are but too familiar. And it is also known, quite as well, to diligent students of history, that not one of those four allegations can be proved from genuine records of the past : that there is no sufficient evidence that St. Peter ever saw the city of Rome, or was bishop of it, or had successors in that see. But suppose that the claim which

* Preached on Sunday, January 25th, 1885, the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle.

has been set up for St. Peter, had been made for St. Paul; that might have been much harder to overthrow. For Paul *was* in Rome; * and he *did* found a church there; and he continued to hold relations to it, and, generally, to the Churches throughout the world in his day; and he said that there came on him daily the care of all the churches; † and he claimed a call to apostleship direct from God, ‡ and asserted, in that respect, his entire independence of men; nay, on one occasion, at least, he withstood St. Peter and rebuked him, § as a chief might reprove his junior officer. In short, he was so extraordinary, so incomparable a man, that the wonder is why, when theorists were inventing an ideal head of the whole Church, like a god over all to the brethren, they did not choose St. Paul, for whom, in the way of supremacy, so much more might have been said than for any man that ever lived.

But let that go. I have but prefaced in this way some remarks on a subject appropriate to the day. What does the Church owe, what do we Christians owe, what does the whole world owe to Paul the apostle? When we glance over a memorandum of his recorded sayings and teachings, we remain amazed and humbled; we bless God for His wonderful virtues and graces displayed in all His saints, and especially in this man; marvel of marvels is the history of him whose miraculous conversion the Church celebrates to-day.

* Acts xxviii. 30.

† 2 Cor. xi. 28.

‡ Gal. i. 1.

§ Gal. ii. 11, 14.

What do we owe to St. Paul ?

First, let us think of some wonders in his spiritual life.

He was converted by our Lord, in Person ; he saw the Lord in His glory, such glory as blinds the natural eye. And thus he was enabled to say: "the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

After that direct personal call he spent three years in seclusion,* preparing for his work, during which time who knows what fresh revelations were made to him ? Doth not God speak to those whom He destines for great things ? And to whom, then, should God have spoken continuously, if not to that man ?

Through after years he was guided, by direct supernatural motions ; as when he went up by revelation to Jerusalem ; † and crossed to Macedonia, led thither by a vision ; ‡ and had warnings through Agabus, § and other disciples, || foretelling his doom ; and was strengthened by an angel in the storm and shipwreck. ¶ But what were these, to the crowning wonder of all ? This man was caught up to the third heaven, he was rapt up into Paradise, and there heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.** So near was he to God ; so unearthly, so remote, so separate from other men ;

* Gal. i. 17, 18.

† Gal. ii. 2.

‡ Acts xvi. 9.

§ Acts xxi. 11.

|| Acts xi. 4.

¶ Acts xxvii. 23.

** 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

avored as none of the old prophets had been. He therefore gives us the ideal of the Christian religion, and the system of the Church, which is not of man, nor by man, nor of the human reason, nor of natural causes, but cometh down upon us from above, as life from outside touching the lower thing which lives not till then, nor hath power to make itself alive. Again, let me ask, What do we owe to this marvellous being? And let me try to answer, rapidly.

Every one sees how vastly his writings exceed in bulk those of the rest. There were twelve apostles at first. Of these only five left writings as sacred scriptures for the Church. Taking now the apostolic letters by themselves, five only left us such, including Paul; and his are five times as much as all the rest together. We have received of him fourteen times more than of St. John, twelve times more than of St. Peter, twenty times more than of St. James, one hundred times more than of St. Jude! And what an inexhaustible mine of wealth is here! Take these his letters, and the two or three fragments of his addresses, in the Acts of the Apostles; and now let us count up what the Church has received of him, as he received it of the Lord Jesus and delivered unto us.

First, as to some great topics of natural religion, he has declared the doctrine of the creation of all things by Almighty God,* in opposition to the pantheistic teachings on the subject of the beginning, and to the materialistic

* Acts xvii. 24; xiv. 15.

and agnostic ideas which obscure the truth and betray man's ignorance. He tells us of the Providence which governs the course of this world, and that in God we live, and move, and have our being.* And he teaches the unity of the human race, since God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.† And of the history of races and nations he shows how it runs not on by chance, but is ordered of God. Moreover, he displays the awful result of human philosophy as a substitute for faith in God, by depicting the ghastly state of morals in the ages before Christ came to cleanse that filth, to make atonement for that sin, and to save men from the corruption that was in the world through lust.‡

Secondly, as to what are known as the doctrines of grace: we owe to St. Paul, the plainest teaching on the original and universal corruption of human nature, § and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, for which there is no remission without shedding of blood. || He also tells us of the Incarnation of that God by whom all things were created, the result of an eternal purpose to bring angels and men into one in Christ: ¶ and he traces the work down to the Atonement on the Cross, when Christ did suffer, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God: and to him we owe the fullest treatise on the theme of the justification of the sinner through faith in the Most Precious

* Acts xvii. 28.

§ Rom. iii. 9-19.

† Acts xvii. 26.

|| Heb. ix. 22.

‡ Romans i. *passim*.

¶ Ephes. i. 10.

Blood, and conformity to the perfect example set us by the Saviour of mankind.

And thirdly, of the sacramental system, where is it so amply described as in the writings of St. Paul? As the extension of the Incarnation through time; as the taking up of men, one by one, and grafting them into the Body of the Lord, so that they become members of His flesh and of His bones; * that system is co-extensive with Christianity, and an integral part thereof. By baptism are we buried into death with Christ and raised again to walk in newness of life.† For that is the laver of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost, ‡ and thereby are we identified with the Lord in a divine mystery, transcending human power to effect or explain. Then, as to the blessed sacrament of His Body and Blood, it is most strange to find, that St. Paul had a special revelation of the scene in that upper room when the sacrifice of the Church was instituted, so that the account which he gives us is not a repetition of those in the gospels, but a new and independent contribution to the eucharistic literature of the Church. “For I have received of the Lord,” saith he (not of the evangelists, not of other Apostles who were in Christ before him, but directly, perchance during that three-years’ retreat in Arabia), “that which I also delivered unto you;” and then follows this new and last account of the institution.§

* Ephes. v. 30.

† Rom. vi. 4. Coloss. ii. 12.

‡ Titus iii. 5.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 23-26.

Fourthly, of eschatology, or the lore of the final things which can befall us, this may be said, that to St. Paul we owe the fullest teaching on the Resurrection of the flesh, that article of the Creed, without which our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain, and Christians are of all men most miserable.* And he foretells the last judgment, when all shall be arraigned at the bar of God; † that day of wrath and revelation of the Divine righteousness, when God shall render to every man according to his deeds. And it is this same hand which has sketched the picture of the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect in their eternal rest.‡

Fifthly, of Holy Order. It is he who has left letters to the chief pastors of the Church; to Timothy, first bishop of the Church of the Ephesians; to Titus, bishop of Crete. Of these documents it may be said that manuals for the clerical order since that day are but expansions of them; that they cover the entire ministerial life; that they are a perfect mirror of the new priesthood, and a sufficient directory to bishop, priest, and deacon in the sanctification of their own life, and in dealing with the flock of Christ committed to their charge.

Come we, sixthly, to practical questions. Which has not this wonderful man illustrated with that light which God vouchsafed to him for the good of the whole Church?

* 1 Cor. xv.

† Rom. ii. 5-9.

‡ Heb. xii. 22-24.

What subjects, now so intensely, so terribly practical to-day, as those of holy marriage, the family, and the training of children? It is to St. Paul that we owe the sacramental view of Holy Matrimony, the union of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others, and for life, figuring the union of Christ and the Church.* He asserts the indissoluble nature of that relation; † the sin of divorce, the vileness of adultery, the blasting destructiveness of lusts which tend to weaken the marriage tie: the sanctity of the human body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which it is destruction from God to defile. ‡ As to the order of the Christian family, he states the duties of husbands, wives, children and servants; § he enters minutely into the question of the right training of the little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Nor is there in this grand soul aught narrow or contracted. He who holds up in its pure sacramental glory the estate of Holy Matrimony, recognizes also the celibate state, as one to which some are called, and which is also blessed of the Lord, and of exceeding worth and value in the kingdom; || and he lays down rules for those who live to God in that estate of voluntary celibacy, under vows which to break is to wax wanton against Christ, ¶ as well as for those who plight troth, one to another, before the altar. And then, when we come to questions of daily practice, he goes into

* Eph. v. 31, 32. † Romans vii. 2, 3. ‡ I Cor. vi. 19. § Eph. v. 22, 25; vi. 1, 5. || Cor. vii.; see whole chapter. ¶ I Tim. v. 11, 12.

minute and innumerable particulars, covering every point that can be thought of in what is commonly known as personal religion, the object being to show us how our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Seventhly, the study of liturgics is one of absorbing and perpetual interest. But I doubt if there can be found anywhere a more delightful, a more profoundly learned and acute monograph on liturgics than his Epistle to the Hebrews. As now understood, and read with clearer eyes, in our time, it appears to be, substantially, a study of the liturgy of the Church of the first age; a devotional, doctrinal, and critical commentary on that primitive Order for the celebration of the Holy Communion, from which, as from a fountain, were derived the liturgies in the Apostolic Constitutions, in the Churches founded by St. James and St. Mark, and in the old sees of St. Chrysostom, and St. Basil.

Let us not stop here, but let us take note, eighthly, of some more recondite problems as to which we are helped by the writings of this Master and Doctor in the Church. Such is the question of the sorrow of the world, the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together until now; † such is the question about the manifestation of the sons of God. ‡ And if you wish to study the mystic sense of the Holy Scripture, who better shall guide you than he who told us what was meant, spirit-

* 1 Thess. v. 23.

† Rom. viii. 22.

‡ Rom. viii. 21.

ually, by the story of Sarah and Hagar ; * and how to comprehend the marvellous histories of the Israelites in the desert, where cloud, and sea, and manna, and rock, and everything else foreshadowed things to come in the latter days. † Here also may we read of the relations of God to those who walk by the light of nature only, having no clear revelation, ‡ and of the action of the Holy Ghost on the old pagan world to prepare the way for Christ.

After all these classified subjects, including ontology, natural religion, the doctrines of grace, the Church, the ministry, the sacramental system, liturgics, the home, the family, personal religion, and many deep questions such as have been referred to, one might make a long list of special topics on which the apostle has left us precious notes and comments. Among them are : divisions in the Church, their cause and remedy ; questions of conscience, as to meats and drinks and other matters apt to perplex ; the gifts of tongues and their interpretation ; collections in Churches and systematic relief of the poor ; women's dress and ornaments, at home and in Church ; the use of wine when the health appears to require it ; the duty of obedience to the civil authority ; the little concerns of individuals, as Onesimus, Zenas the lawyer, Alexander the coppersmith, Archippus, and Demas, in which must have been involved an endless amount of personal interests ; all referred to that man, on whom was also laid the care

* Gal. iv. 21-31. † 1 Cor. x. 1-11. ‡ Acts x. 34-35. Rom. i. 20.

of all the Churches. And with this let me stop, not as if I must, but with due regard to the time, and that the moral or application may be drawn from the things referred to in this hasty way.

Take these as what they are, mere heads for an index, and that a very imperfect index, to the addresses and letters of Paul, and what should be your first impulse? What, but to glorify God for such a gift to the world, to the Church, and to every separate man, woman, and child in the household of faith! And, again, after that first outbreak of joy and gratitude, ask yourself this: How he could have been what he was, how he could have wielded that tremendous power, extending to this far-distant day, over the intellect, the spirit, the conscience of such multitudes of men, unless he was, what he claimed, the Lord's anointed, sent direct to us, as it were from the Glorified Head of the Church? It must have been by special call, by constant guiding, by continuous inspiration from on high, that he became what he was, and is, and ever shall be, to mankind. "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." Sublime claim! Justified amply by all that we have heard and known! Sole explanation of that supernatural life!

And meditating of him thus, you shall be able to value at their real worth the character of those men, who approach this Apostle, not that they may sit at his feet, and humbly learn of him whose shoe's latchet they are

not worthy to unloose ; but, on the contrary, to set up for his critics, to test him by their own measure, to carp and cavil, to judge for themselves whether to hear or not, and what of respect or reverence to yield to him. Immeasurable must be the vanity, unbounded the conceit, of those who take that line ; and yet it is the inevitable position of any man who claims to have, in his own reason and in his private judgment, a sufficient criterion of truth, and peremptorily declines to yield to any authority which does not begin and centre in himself. And if there be a spectacle apt to demonstrate the absurdity of that claim, it is presented wherever we behold one of these inflated boasters, composing himself, with the cap on the head and the bells in the fist, for a critical trial and rational investigation of that Prince among the princes of the Holy Catholic Church, who was an apostle of Jesus Christ, not of his own will but of the will of God, and who speaks to us as an ambassador from the eternal kingdom.

Great is this day ; ranking any ordinary Sunday of the kalendar. Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the wonderful graces and virtues vouchsafed unto us in all the saints, and especially in him whom we commemorate. The Gentiles shall come to thy light, O great teacher of the nations, and the kings of thought to the brightness of thy rising, that they may learn of thee a higher wisdom. For

thou didst see the Lord in the way, and we may see Him also, thy Lord and ours, whensoever we humble ourselves as little children, moving no other question than this,

“LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?”

SERMON XXI.

LIFE SAVED, YET LOST.

ST. MATTHEW XVI. 25.

“Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.”

THE reader of the holy gospels will note great differences in them; things are in one that are not in another, and those variations are often so remarkable as to cause surprise. Thus, for example, in the gospel according to St. John, no mention is made of the Lord's temptation, nor of the agony in Gethsemane, nor yet—which seems strangest of all after reading the sixth chapter—is there a word about the institution of the Lord's Supper. The fact makes coincidences more impressive, where they occur. Now the saying of Christ in the text, is in every gospel of the four; and in two of the four it occurs twice, and in two different gospels it is word for word the same.* From this we naturally conclude that something

**St. Matthew* x. 39: “He that findeth (εὕρω) his life (ψυχὴν) shall lose it, and he that loseth (ἀπολέσας) his life (ψυχὴν) for my sake, shall find it.”—*St. Matthew* xvi. 25: “Whosoever will save (σώσει) his life (ψυχὴν) shall lose it: and whosoever will lose (ἀπολέσῃ) his life (ψυχὴν) for my sake, shall find it.”—*St. Mark* viii. 35: Precisely the

of vast importance is here. It has been called by some a *proverbial* saying: it is more than that, it is a searching, profound, and most characteristic word; a kind of symbol containing immense significance. He seems to have uttered it again and again, till it sank into the hearts of those who heard it, and weighed on them, and followed them through years of obedience or rebellion. And believing that it goes down to the very foundation, and applies to us in the most direct, the broadest, the deepest way, let me try to draw forth some of the wonderful meanings that are here, for warning, comfort, and edification; though the limits of one discourse are inadequate to the work in hand.

- First, then, observe that the Lord speaks of our “life.”
- Again, observe, that He uses three different words expressive of what we may do with our life: we may love it; we may find it; we may save it. And again observe that there is but one term to express the result of loving, or finding, or saving our life, and that word is *loss*. Hark to the solemn statements. “He that loveth his life, shall lose it . . . He that findeth his life, shall lose it. Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it.” To love, to find, to save: any one of

same as St. Matthew xvi. 25, except, “for my sake and the gospel’s.”—*St. Luke* ix. 24: Precisely the same as St. Matthew xvi. 25, except, “the same shall save it.”—*St. Luke* xvii. 33: “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”—*St. John* xii. 25: “He that loveth (φιλεῖν) his life (ψυχὴν) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal,” (ζωὴν αἰώνιον.)

these is to lose. Now as to the three terms, they are so simple, as hardly to need explanation. To love is to regard with intense affection and delight. To find is to recover, generally after searching and painstaking, what was missing or lost. To save is to rescue or deliver, or else to hoard up and keep and not to spend. To love our life ; to search after it as a thing once lost to us, and by all means to be had again ; to rescue it out of a hand that was laid upon it, to be chary of it, to save it up and treasure it : these are what men may do with it. And if they do any one of these, the end shall be loss, loss eternal. And this must be one of those truths which no power can change ; one of those immutable things which *must* be ; otherwise our Lord would not have laid on it the stress he did, nor repeated it again and again ; nor would it have met our eyes in every gospel, nor would it have been found on the sacred pages over and over, with slight variations which actually deepen its power over the imagination.

Now it is obvious that the first thing for us to do is to settle the meaning of the word "life." In this the Lord help us. He says in one of the places I have quoted, "our life in this world." The term is the very same which is used in Genesis, where it is said that man became a living soul. Again, it is a word which the Hebrews used as a synonym for happiness. A happy life in this world ; perhaps that phrase might do by way of beginning our definition. But that definition is not complete. A good

Christian life is a happy life ; nay, it is the happiest of all ; and it is led in this world, so that one might lead a happy life in this world and yet lose nothing in the world to come. Let us go on then, to take in other elements. Life in this world appears to mean life which has no reference to any other ; a worldly life only ; no more. A life which is regarded as a complete and finished thing in itself ; which needs no rounding and filling out by aught to come after it ; a life which has, in its activities, in its aims, in its felt necessities, no relation to any other : that seems to be the life here spoken of. It is hard for you to understand how there could be such a life ; for you are Christians ; you cannot imagine yourselves as living without any belief at all in anything beyond the passing hour and these fleeting years. But such a view of life is possible ; it is not illogical ; it may be taken without offence to theology. For God Almighty, when he made man, made him at first the tenant of this natural world, which was to him, for a time, a home, and, during that time, gave him all that the natural man requires : nor was it till God proposed to him a supernatural end, and an eternal life of glory and felicity like that of God Himself, that the natural, earthly life sank away out of sight, and man, reaching forth towards the heavenly prize, lost his relish for visible and temporal joys. This, then, is what we understand by that life which we are bidden not to love, nor save, nor find. It is this natural existence, this earthly state, this present life, alone and by itself,

with nothing in it prophetic of the world to come, with nothing in it to sanctify, hallow, bless; a life, perhaps of toil, perhaps of pleasure, yet marked by no holy signs, secular, social and domestic, wherein all is for time and man, and nothing for God. That is our natural state; we began that way; and there should we have remained, but for some act on God's part calling us away; as the scripture calls it, "electing" us, giving us a new birth unto another, and a wholly different condition, and begetting us again unto a living hope which has its spring and centre in a supernatural region.

To know how to take Christ's words to ourselves, let us think of the way in which they came home to others long ago.

What we are seeking to understand is that expression about finding and saving this present life: as for loving it, that is readily understood. Now think of the call of the apostles. Our Lord found them the children of this world. He passed by; He said, Leave what you are doing and follow Me. The quiet voice broke in upon the low and humble life, and brought it to an end. It brought it to an end, by putting a greater thing into its place. It has always been so in this world. When men are called of God, they have to begin by giving something up. Abraham had to leave his father's tents, and go out a pilgrim, and sojourn in a strange land. Elisha had to leave the oxen, the home, and the old life, and follow the austere prophet who passed by and cast the mantle upon him.

· And what had been in the old dispensation still held good in the new. There were fishers in their little boats; and money-changers, at the receipt of custom, and such men as can be found any day, wrapped up in their small concerns and enjoying life like honest, sensible folk. But the call came, and at once it made a difference; old things passed away; behold all things became new. I doubt not that these men were measurably happy and content. It is only the sickly and morbid who are not so. Life is dear to us all; and to average men and women sweet, a thing to thank God for and to enjoy. And so Simon and Andrew, James and John, no doubt loved the sea, and their boats, and took pleasure in their honest trade of fishermen; and Matthew did his work with a good heart, and so was it with the rest. But is that enough for us? Is that the way to live? Can we make no more of life than this, to work, and eat, and sleep, to go about and meet our friends, and enjoy the little close routine of this mortal day? Man is capable of greater things than any conceivable earthly occupation can give: and when they heard in old times, the voice of the Lord, it was a quiet closing up of all the past, an opening of a new career. · Of the old life it might have been said, with exactness, that it was taken away, hidden, lost to them. And then came their trial; to leave it forever, and go after Christ; or to return and seek, and find, and save it. This they could have done; but only by withdrawing from Christ, and declining to walk in the path to which He pointed.

Christ, in his call, had taken them away from the world ; He had lifted them up ; the old was gone. To demur, and refuse, and draw back from following Him, would have been to seek, to find again, to love more than Christ the lower life from which He had tried to draw them away.

Now let us see whether, and if so, in what way, this far-reaching word finds us out. I ask, Can it be possible that in our own career anything has happened to us like what happened to the Lord's apostles, and to those whom He called to His service ? Can it be possible that in any way, at any time, by any means, *our* life, our low earthly life, our life as the mere tenants of this fleeting world, has been so taken away from us, that we cannot any longer pursue it leisurely, pleasantly, and enjoyably, without being said to have actually sought it again, found it, and saved it ? Instead of asking that question, let me ask another. Can it be possible that Christ's acts were exhausted at the very beginning of His mediatorial life ? Can it be possible that Christ's grand words are now a dead letter ? Must it not be, certainly, that what He said so earnestly, and again and again, with grave repetition, does apply to us also, and to every one to the end of the world ! It is unquestionably true that something, like this that we have been thinking of, has occurred to us. It has come to us all in one way, certainly : to large numbers of us it has come in two ways. Our life *has* been taken away from us, in one sense ; and in another aspect

of the case we have acquiesced, and accepted the new conditions in which we have been placed. This thing was done for us all, first, in our baptism.

God help the man who thinks lightly of that first of the two great sacraments necessary to salvation ! It is no empty form, no mere sign to the world, no ceremony which one may decline or pass through without affecting his eternal hopes. On the contrary, it is a mighty agency of the Holy Ghost, always effectual to the ends for which it was instituted, and marking, in each instance, the new birthday of the Christian soul. Now among the ends served by our baptism was this : it was a call from Christ ; it was our election into His kingdom ; it made us, actually and from that hour, members of Christ and citizens of the New Jerusalem, the city from above. Effectually, whenever a child or any person is baptized, that is done for him which was done for Adam, when God Almighty added to all ordinary natural endowments, the supernatural gifts and graces relating to an immortality of perpetual life and light. Effectually, whenever a child or a person is baptized, his relations to the dying world are changed, and merged into a new condition : the old life is lost, taken away, hidden, buried out of sight. Does any doubt this ? Let him search the scriptures ; let him ask of our fathers that went before us. Baptism is the one and only election of which the Church knows ; baptism is the sacrament of regeneration ; it *is* our regeneration ; it is our death to sin, our new birth unto righteous-

ness. Of the baptized, the apostle says: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;" hidden away, not to be found again: as if he had taken, to guide his thought, the very word of Christ. And again he says: "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him." And of all us Christians, in our state as such, he says: "If any man be in Christ,"—and which of you could bear the thought that he was *not* in Christ? we all hope we are, we think we are:—"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature;" a new creation, something made over anew, remodelled, beginning again, with new prospects and objects, and a new life;—"old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Who can read such statements as these, who can study the words of the Lord and the words of His apostles, putting them side by side and comparing them, yet fail to see that from the moment of our baptism a thorough change is wrought in our standing in this world? That change is to us, what the call to the apostles was: a new life begins, an old life dies; and as with them so with us; we cannot get that old life back unless we find it, seek it, save it, love it, in short, more than we love the promises of God through Christ and the hope of the life eternal in the heavens.

But again, in the case of many, or most of us, we have added our own acts to complete the act of God. All of us have been called sacramentally; for "Know ye not that as many of you as have been baptized into Christ

have put on Christ?" But many of us—and would that it were all!—have ratified His work, by coming forward to Confirmation, by becoming Communicants. When we look back to our Confirmation and First Communion, it is as to a sweet, pure day, now far off, when we were more deeply impressed by religious truth than ever before, when God seemed very near, and the heart was tender, and longed for that peace which this world cannot give, and for a closer walk with the Lord. Now that was an acceptance of the vocation; it was what Simon and Andrew, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Judas also, did when they began their new life with their Master; and not to live answerably to that Christian calling, and as becometh the children of light, would be, in effect, to turn back and search for the life out of which we were taken, and try to find again what had thus been hidden with Christ in God, and to save and bring back again to a wretched vitality what was dead on Christ's cross and buried in His grave. Such seems to be the just parallel between the case of those who were chosen out of this world by Christ directly, when He was among us here, and those who ever since have been chosen out of the same evil world through those sacraments which He hath instituted as means to bring us to Him now, and keep us with Him forever.

I said, at the outset, that it was impossible to say all that one would like to say about this text, in one discourse. Intending to return to it, let me leave, for the present,

the things that we ought to do, the hating one's life in this world, the losing the life, the throwing it away for Christ's sake and the gospel's, and dwell a while, before concluding, on the things that we are *not* to do. I have tried to show what the life is, and how it has been taken from us. Now let us force again upon our thoughts the danger of getting back into the bondage from which the Lord has made us free. This common natural life of ours; the life of those who are "conceived and born in sin;" the life which is so loaded down with divers kinds of trial and sorrow; the life which has no doubt much that is bright and pleasant in it, but also much that is very hard and bitter; this life which can be abstracted from any practical relation to aught that is to come hereafter, and made to look as if it came out of nothing and went back into nothing; why should we love it so dearly as to care for nothing else? why should we be so wrapped up in it as to feel almost as if it sufficed to our necessity? Men thus love it; and a cold shudder passes through the soul when they think, "After a little while, comes an end, and then what shall become of me!" And some men are like persons seeking to find what is lost. You lose a piece of silver, and you give your whole thought to searching for it. You mislay a book, or an important paper, and you give yourself no rest till you find it again. A name is gone from your memory, or the details of an incident from your recollection, and you think, and think, and try to get hold of the lost idea, the impression which

you cannot trace. So do some men search the world through, fix their whole thoughts on their life, and try to get out of it the pleasure they miss, and of it to fill the void in their hearts. And think what it is to save : the double sense that is here. You save a thing from destruction : you rescue a drowning man, you run in haste to snatch something from the flames. Or again, you save things by putting them away and making no use of them. You hide things in dark closets or on top shelves, and there they remain, unused, till the dust settles on them and the moth or the worm consume them. Or so might one hide grain away, instead of sowing it in the ground ; and what might have produced the bright green leaf and the rich full fruit in the ear, lies there sterile and valueless. Thus do some men save their lives ; they never will take any risk ; they never do one brave, unselfish thing ; they are always in alarm for consequences, afraid of compromising themselves or their interest, afraid of losing the earthly possession. Or they bury their talents and skill, their ideals and ambitions, so that when they come to die no one can recollect one single thing they ever did in all their lives that others might be thankful for, or for which society was the better. After this fashion do men save, find, seek, love, their earthly life. In any case, it is a terrible mistake ; in the case of one who was made a Christian in his baptism, or ever professed himself a Christian, it is more than a mistake ; it is, I had almost said, an unpardonable sin. Mistake, sin, blunder,

crime, it surely must be, and nothing less. For let us remember a truth, which could not have been told us more plainly than God has told it, which no argument, as yet, has shaken from its hold on the conscience of the wise, which the unbelief of man cannot make of none effect ; the truth that this life is, generally speaking, the preparation for the next, and the only state in which preparation can be made ; that man's future beyond the grave is undoubtedly determined by his acts and works, his thoughts and beliefs, this side the tomb : and that unless the blessed structure of eternal years shall have been founded, at least by our hand and by our own conscious, voluntary deed, in this world, it will never be built. Thus, then, we come to the one word *loss*, as that which truly states the end of such blunder, error, folly, sin. He that loveth his life shall lose it ; he that findeth his life shall lose it ; he that shall seek to save his life shall lose it. Let us defer, for the time, the consideration of the other, the bright, the glorious side of our Divine Master's saying. But meanwhile, let that awful word, *loss*, haunt every soul. It is a possibility in every one's case : none of us is so safe as to be secure from loss. And think what a miserable conclusion, after searching, to discover that what we found was worthless ; after saving, to see it was not worth saving ; after loving, to find that we had loved a death's head, a heap of refuse, an empty, soulless frame of dust. And to have, after all this pains, and all this effort, no sound eternally in the ears but this : " Thou hast gained the whole

world, thou hast lost thy own soul ! Thou hast gained a little wealth, a few pretty objects, a friend or two, a hollow wreath of fame ; thou hast lost thy God ! Thou hast gained what a brief life could give, thou hast lost the unending treasures of eternity." Be this our first great argument against giving ourselves, body and soul, to the world. Christ put it first ; He warned, before He promised ; let the warning be taken to heart to-day, and perhaps humility and apprehension may so soften our hearts as to make us better able to appreciate what further He told us, when the time to pursue these reflections shall have come.

SERMON XXII.

LIFE LOST, YET SAVED.

ST. MARK VIII. 35.

“Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”

EVERY one must feel, in an age like that in which we live, and in a society such as that of which we form a part, how hard it is to understand these words; how difficult to know what they mean, and especially to see how they could, in any practical way, apply to ourselves. And yet, considering how often our Blessed Lord repeated them, and what stress He laid upon them, and remembering that He is the One and only Saviour to the end of the world, and that there is and can be no other gospel but His, we feel as if there must be a sense in which they may be laid hold on and made simple and real to every one of us, and are sure that we are in some way called to try and fulfil them.

Life means, of course, our existence here on earth. The word takes in all that makes up that existence; the sweet as well as the bitter, the good as well as the bad, the harmless and innocent as well as the hurtful and

wrong. Life is that share which each one of us has in the movement of the age; it is our little portion of these thoughts, activities, acquisitions, deeds, efforts, which make up together the immense mysterious aggregate of the existence of man. As living, we have our place in the social conditions of the time. And this is the thing that we are to lose. What is meant by such a loss? What does it include? And after such a loss, what would be left, and how would he look and act who had sustained it? There are real difficulties here; difficulties too great, perhaps, for the preacher to remove. Let us, at all events, feel our way through them if we can, and try to get light on them from above, while we look into them closely, yet with a very reverent spirit.

To lose the life means to let it go, voluntarily; it is to do something out of the ordinary way. Loss of life is a technical phrase; when we use it we refer, not to the daily and monotonous record of death from natural causes, but to what is sudden, unusual, and out of the common course of things. But our Lord, in selecting and applying this term as He does, appears to go on further and to invest it with an additional and a supernatural solemnity. He seems to point to a path which men would not instinctively take, and could with difficulty be induced to take at all; to something above nature and beyond our inclinations; to a triumph over the natural desires of the heart, a rising above a point at which it would have been no wonder if a man had stayed all his days.

In the inevitable course of human events, this life, for each of us in turn, must pass away ; we shall die, we shall see man no more with the inhabitants of the world ; whatever makes up our mortal state, shall suddenly become as if it had never been ; the world shall recede from us, and we shall vanish away. Now that which comes apace in nature—or at least something so like it as to be called properly by the same name—is the thing which a man may bring on suddenly and by his own act, so that for him, the bonds which held him to the world and held the world to him, shall be, to such extent and in such fashion loosed, that he may be said to be dead unto it, and alive in another sense and under other aspects. Is this thing ever done ? If so, we may study what we then find by way of specimen, and learn our lesson from the examples shown by servants of God.

Unquestionably there are those who do so lose their life. It matters not how ; whether literally and actually or in some inconspicuous way ; but in some way or ways the thing is done. We have seen persons withdrawing from that great, strange, complex thing to which we give the vague name of the World, and departing from its gaze ; whatever attraction it had for them seems to be exerted no longer ; they are indifferent to its call ; they hear other voices to which they prefer to listen ; other interests occupy their thoughts. From stage to stage, journeying far away, they go out from the old scenes ; they are observed, afar, as it were in

another climate, and under a new atmosphere ; they are dead to the past ; their past is dead to them. And in some cases we observe such persons, impelled by some power which rules them solely, going right into the face of death, and actually and literally laying down their lives. In such instances there is no lack of finish to the picture, no possibility of a misunderstanding ; the loss of life is as real as that of the wretch who blows out his brains or cuts his throat, or the soldier who falls under fire, because the command was given to move into the rain of deadly shot. Persons have thus lost their life, before our very eyes, by their own act, and, so far as we can see, for no imaginable temporal motive or reward. It can be done ; it is done. And in this, there is an idea, which makes the act the same in every case, however the outer form may differ. Let us disengage the substance from the accidents. The idea is that of self-surrender for the love of God : the giving up for Christ's sake what one might keep and enjoy and make a great deal of. What outer expression this idea may take is not, after all, so important. The life may be lost without dying in the physical sense : one might live on, year after year, after the life, in a certain sense, had gone. The accidents, the outward form, depend on the state of the world, the demands of the age, or social circumstances ; the thing itself is one and the same in every age. It is repeated in great numbers of instances ; it is done all the time, by persons overlooked by the

world and unknown to it ; quietly, unostentatiously, and where you would not suspect that anything of that kind was in progress. And so, it is a thing which might be done by any one of us, and is done, no doubt, by those whose hearts God sees, and whom, by His grace, He has turned wholly to Himself.

The root-idea in this is surrender to God ; giving up for His sake what it is natural to keep for one's own ; living under a supreme and regulating conviction that the true value of this life consists in the facilities it affords for winning an eternal reward ; seeking to repay to Christ what He has given. That is the belief, and those are the thoughts which lead men to undervalue, to give up, to lay down their life in this world ; and this dominating faith will seek and find expression where it exists, and be that expression more or less pronounced, it tells the story clearly to God and man. The scale is long, on which the action moves. But anything which you or any one will do as against this world and for God, is a motion that way. If you are among persons whose theory of life and morals is low, and you dissent from their views ; if, when unsound judgments about conduct and manners are uttered, you interpose and condemn ; if you insist on principles which the spirit of the age denies ; if you give to charity where you might spend on yourself ; if you decline to go to places, or join in amusements, or countenance proceedings, or read books which are doubtful, or wrong, or unseemly, or of bad tendency ; if you do any

one of these things, because you are a Christian and bound to speak out for Christ, and when you know that you will be sneered at, or thought the less of, or ridiculed, or called names for your loyalty to what you believe to be true and right: these are like little experiments in the art of losing the life. Whenever you lose a few grains of the good opinion of worldly persons; or put away some pleasure, minded never to taste it again; or cast some bread upon the waters; or do some deed which you know will alienate one or two, and leave you with so many friends or admirers the less:—you are making an inroad on the full circle of your life. To carry out that process, in very many things, till it sets you more and more apart from the world, and casts you more and more on the Gospel, the Church, and God, for your happiness and your hopes; would be to ascend the scale of self-surrender. Wholly to give yourself away would be to die unto the world. And if it pleased God, as in days of martyrdom, to ask the actual sacrifice of your breath and your blood, and to grant you the supreme honor of literally laying down your life for Him, you would but have attained the summit of that staircase up to heaven, all the steps whereof, yea, even the first and lowest and easiest for us all, are, notwithstanding, steps of gold.

There are certain matters to be considered as regards this loss of life: its difficulty, the motives which constrain to it, the high rewards; how hard a thing it is, how grand, how wise. And first think how hard it is to lose

the life. Measure the difficulty by the hold of the world on us. This life is the first that we know, and the only one we know, naturally ; it would be our all in all, if, as we advanced in years, we were never to hear of another. No wonder it absorbs time and thought. To keep it is not easy : so many are the perils which threaten it, the moment we are born. And if to keep it merely is difficult, how much greater is the cost of maintaining it in content and comfort ! Think of the strife and competition, the wants so many, the needs so great. But suppose that a man succeeds not only in keeping his life but in holding it in prosperity : the result of success is so sweet that the love of life for its own sake grows and grows ; what we have worked hard to get and keep we must love. But then when a man has all that he needs, he sees before him the more-than-needful, the superfluous, the luxuries of life. There another field opens on the view, vast, interminable ; the eye is filled with seeing and the ear with hearing. Cultivate yourself as some do, and you will gain every year in the power to appreciate and enjoy what this life can give, and to you will come the reward of that delicious toil. Think of the student, the scholar, the skilled in art and literature, the versed in every pleasure ; what they draw from the wide world, and how full life must seem to them ! We cling to the world, while well and happy : and how many sweet, pure things there are ; pleasant little histories in the house, valued friendships, growing knowl-

edge, steady accumulation of the treasures of time. Judge of the cost of giving up all this, by the difficulty of letting any part of it go. Measure the hardness of such self-surrender by weighing the chances of your ever making it. What motive can induce to lay down a life so full, so rich, so sweet ?

Alas! it is not always full, rich, and sweet : life is often empty, dry and dismal ; and there are many motives to lay it down and throw it away. The suicide loses his life, from misery and despair. The ambitious may do it for fame, and the love of praise, and to have glory of man ; or it may be given up under obedience to some human command, which must be done at any cost, as when soldiers go stolidly into the fatal rain of shot and shell because they have to. But no such motive gives us the grand act commanded by Christ. He that will lose his life that way must do it for Christ's sake and the gospel's. The end must be a religious end ; an object beyond this world. It should not be mixed up with lower, personal inducements. It should not be the result of disappointment, or of slights and mortifications, or of a feeling that as one cannot take high rank in a brilliant sphere, it is better to have such eminence as may be attained in a quieter walk in life. It should not be done, because the world is not bright, nor life sweet, nor hope strong, as once ; because one is beginning to fade, and be neglected, and cannot maintain a dearly loved position. No : the motive must be the love of

Christ; the object must be the promise of the Gospel. The thing is best done, by those who see how much they might make of the world, if they would, if they dared; how full and rich, how warm and brilliant, they might make their life, how much they could crowd into their days, in amusement, excitement, pleasure, through study and culture, and gathering of appliances on every side: and yet do turn from all this to the place where Christ walks apart, the model of a life outside of these scenes, the example of One who was in the world but not of it, and who, with no impossible, impracticable asceticisms, was yet totally detached from these poor and weak surroundings, by the firm desire to be and abide with God. And again observe what it says: "for my sake and the gospel's." This excludes what one might call mere humanitarianism. There are multitudes whose ears are attent to charity, benevolence, and a human philanthropy, while yet they will not hear of Christ or the Church; they can understand a natural motive, they will not hear of a supernatural one. They will do much for a sick or suffering man; they will venture into danger, they will risk the life, they will give it away, for a human creature; they would not lift a finger for the honor, the memory, the love of the great Redeemer of the world. They will give money to state or municipal institutions, to secular societies, to benevolent associations; but not a penny would they give to the Church or the Gospel, regarded as a super-

natural agency for the spiritual health of men. In such works, in such devotions there is much to admire, much for lukewarm Christians to imitate. But the sacrifices made that way are comparatively low and poor; they lack motive, faith, the view of the land that is very far off, the sight of the King in His beauty. Loss of life with a bad motive, is mere sheer horror. Loss of life with a human, earthly, temporal motive only, is abortive, and imperfect. Loss of life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's is the crowning glory of human actions; and the loss is no loss, but gain eternal.

Such then is this act of self-surrender: an act to be done willingly, and under no compulsion; best done by those to whom the world is yet bright and life is sweet: an act of faith; an act referred to Christ as its end and reward. Martyrdoms out of faith are barren things measured by the standard of the eternal kingdom; they may call forth admiration and inspire courage; they do not help men to a bright outlook beyond the world. The act must live and move in reverence for the Gospel and its principles, in love of the Church and her holy teaching; it must have a higher reference than deeds done for man's sake only, as if there were no God-man to think of; rightly done, it far outshines the feeble works of the popularly charitable and benevolent; it takes them into itself, and quickens them with spiritual life. And as it is the proof of a supernatural virtue, so it finds its completeness in a supernatural reward.

That reward must consist in the transforming of the corruptible into incorruption, and the mortal into immortality. It is not the annihilating of this life and putting something else in its place; but the lifting up the weak thing and making it strong. Our Lord does not say: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall have the lost one replaced:" but, whosoever shall lose it, he shall save it; the same one, which out of Christ must perish utterly, shall be transmuted, transfigured, glorified with fresh and ever-during loveliness. And what marvellous figures does the Lord use, to denote what He means to do for us hereafter! "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. And he that overcometh and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and I will give him the morning star. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and I will write upon him My new name: and to him will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcome,

and am set down with My Father in His throne.* Before these majestic sayings of the Lord, one would fain be still ; musing of their wonderful significance, knowing not, nor daring to ask too closely what each means, but seeing in them, as unrolled before the seven Churches of the Apocalypse, one or two great thoughts, cardinal thoughts, leading us ever back to former words of the Saviour. To overcome the world is the condition to the attainment of what is promised ; to resist its temptations, discard its principles, renounce allegiance to it, and remove far away from its sins. And the life so detached shall become a new life in the temple of God ; a life bright as the stars ; a life pure as the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints ; a life of joy and praise with those who live for evermore, and praise the God whose grace given to them in this life was not given in vain, and who, through its power, counted not their lives dear, but gave what they had to give freely unto Him.

Do you know any such cases as those which I have endeavored to describe ? You do ; you have been thinking of some such, while I have been speaking. In every age the Lord's witnesses are among us ; their simple, beautiful lives, the comment on His words, their examples a lesson and a study for us all the day. Some are among us now, and accessible, so that we may go to them, and learn the secret how not to love this world, how to

* Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 26, 28 ; iii. 5, 12, 21.

live in it without being of it, how to be dead to life and yet to live. You may lose your life in the mystical and spiritual sense without literally dying. St. James and St. John both lost their lives for Christ's sake, though one died by the sword in the year 43, and the other lived to a great age and died a natural death, in the year 99. And others, as we have seen, have been devoted in deed as well as in will; they have quietly broken off with a life which was just as sweet to them as to you, and have looked into the hollow eyes of death, and have bowed their heads to his blow. Such are sleeping in their quiet graves, where men may go, and kneeling on the grass on which the rain of pitying tears descends, pray God to make them better for what they have beheld. And O! how many must they be, whose burial places are unknown and long forgotten of us men, whose souls are under the altar whence the long cry goes up to God; the holy witnesses for Christ, the lovers of His Church, who saw other men only in Him, the man of sorrows; who deemed it the first of all their claims that they were children of the Church; who found in one devout Communion such sweetness as no child of this world has ever tasted, to whom the altar of God here, as well as there, was the dear place of rest. Let us honor in our hearts what must be the best that can be done by mortals; let us imitate the saints in some poor little way of our own, and desire that in spirit at least we may be with them. God does not call any one to things too high for him; there

be higher and lower forms of self-surrender, of self-conquest ; even the lower forms He will not despise. It is the idea which He regards, rather than the exact expression. But this one thing let us remember ; that he who will keep his life unto life eternal must detach himself, somehow or other, from the bands which keep him down on the low ground ; he must find some way of self-renunciation, and it must be so true and real, that God's eye will see it and recognize the sign of His servants. Search we, in this mortal day, for some honest, practical method by which we may escape the impending ruin of the world and stand secure and alive at last before the Son of Man.

SERMON XXIII.

LESSONS FROM THE DESERT WAYS.

ACTS VIII. 30, 31.

“And Philip heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?”

THE men who thus commenced their dialogue, were alike in a few respects, but in all others different. Both were travellers, both were stewards, and each had authority. But one was rich, and the other was poor. One had a conspicuous place and station in this world, while the other was hardly known. One had been bred in luxury and ease; the other was used to serve. One of these travellers rode in his chariot, the other fared on foot, having his loins girded up and his staff in hand. One was the steward of a great Queen, and returning to her court and to the charge of all her treasure; but the other was going down to Gaza which is desert, in trust with the Gospel ministry and the commission of the most High God. The authority of one of these men was that which is exercised in temporal concerns: but the other had to do with those eternal interests as to which all men are

equal and all times the same. One was acting under the orders of Candace, sovereign of the Ethiopians : the other must go as bidden by the angel of the Lord of Hosts. Such, in likeness, and unlikeness, were they who stood face to face in the desert : the courtier, with his honors and magnificence about him, the humble deacon of the Catholic Church.

Let us attend to what occurred at that interview, and take up, one by one, the lessons which it seems to teach.

Philip the deacon, had been sent down toward the south, unto the way that goeth from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. The angel had spoken, and he arose, and went, not knowing whither. It is our duty to listen for the voice of God, and obey, at once. This deacon of Christ's Church was the counterpart of Balaam of old, and of Jonah the reluctant prophet ; he turned his face immediately toward the wilderness and the solitary place. He might have raised questions about this order. To whom should he preach when he got there ? Why be sent to a solitude ? Why be thus banished and exiled ? Might not one be more useful in Jerusalem ? Did not that city present a wider field to zeal and talents ? Shall a man be asked to bury his gifts, his abilities, and himself in a desert ? Thus the worldly-minded would demur. But the speech of faith and obedience is of another tone. If God set a man far off from his choice and preference, that is no concern of the servant, whose simple thought is to do the Master's will. Philip was called to

the desert; he asked no question why, but down to the desert he went.

Now God sees all parts of the world at once, and has His reason for every act. And He had sent Philip to intercept another man. Thus are we brought mysteriously together, and thus are inwoven the strands of lives. We know not at the time; afterwards we see why certain things were ordered as they were; we can trace the influence of mind on mind, of life on life. Even so, Philip found that the desert was not empty. While walking on, he heard a voice; it was that of some one reading aloud; and as the sound became clearer, he saw what seemed to be a chariot approaching, and one seated in it; and his was the voice which had been heard.

Strange indeed were the preparations for the gospel in the heathen world. Here is an instance to the point; men were feeling after Christ, in the unsatisfied hunger of the soul. This man had been at Jerusalem; he had gone there to worship God: and now, returning, he sat in his chariot and read the Holy Scriptures. Surely he was meek and lowly at heart. Whatever impression that equipage may have made on Philip, as he looked, he was greatly in error, if he thought, "Here is probably a haughty man of the world!" Perhaps he thought it of him; we are ever ready to condemn on outward appearances; nay, it is probable that he had some such notion, for it does not seem to have occurred to him that he could have any concern with that great man, till the

Spirit said, "Go join thyself to yonder chariot." Thus do appearances deceive. The humble and meek may be in kings' courts; under the robe of wealth and state may beat a heart uncorrupt before God. This person, for example, had the charge of vast earthly treasure; and yet his thoughts are far away; he is meekly reading the Word of life, and seeking the pearl of great price. It is the cheap and contemptible art of the demagogue to rail against the rich. Remember: a rich man of Arimathea, was deemed worthy to receive the Body of Jesus Christ; nor is the heavenly City less pure and holy because the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

But Philip went—he ran, he went with alacrity, forward to do his duty when he saw the way. And he discerned the place of the reading, and knew its solemn application; yet doubted whether the reader understood. He himself had not until recently apprehended the meaning of those words; so might it be with others. And therefore he asked him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And the eunuch replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"

The answer shows the character of the man; it commends him, not to approval—that is too cold a term—to affection and love. He spoke like an earnest, honest seeker after truth. Who was this traveller on foot, who, running towards the chariot, interrupted his reading and taxed him with lack of knowledge? How abrupt, how offensive the speech! Why not bid his servants drive

the fellow away? There may have been, in Philip's dress, what told his sacred office. But that is most unlikely; nor is the supposition necessary. Enough that the question was put, not to a conceited spirit, puffed up with pride, but to a pure, humble, candid mind. This man of Ethiopia felt his influence while he read. He hoped for light; yet, though he had it not, he read on. When asked a plain question, he told the plain truth. He was not like them that are wise in their own eyes; he was not one of those who think they know everything, or can find it out unhelped; he did not count himself to have apprehended even the written word of God, so long as there were helps yet unused to ascertain its meaning. He felt his need of instruction; if this unknown and insignificant stranger could teach him, he was not above learning from him. This is the ground on which it is not toil, but luxury, to sow the seed of the word of life: the harvest and the reaping are sure. And it seems a good and pleasant thing, that this docile soul read on, and still read, though all was mysterious and obscure. Take the lesson to thyself. Read thou God's blessed word, and in due time He will make it clear. Cease not to read, because thou dost not comprehend. It is good to hear the voice of young children, as they read aloud from the Bible. It is good to hear young children, even very young children, repeat the Creed. They do not understand: what of that? In time they will; but let them learn these words now, and so read on. The

very words have power to purify the air and comfort the listener: the sound of the voice, reciting the inspired sayings of the Holy Ghost, invites the very angels to hearken. So this man read aloud, humble as a little child. God were not God, if he had not attended to the cadence of that measured voice which broke the stillness of the desert land.

And now the light is dawning, and soon to shine full into that soul already prepared for the dayspring from on high. "And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him;" and so they rode on together, and the reading was resumed. There is something in this scene which exerts on Christian minds an unusual fascination; and the secret is disclosed, the moment we consider, what place of the scripture it was, in particular, which the nobleman was reading, and to which he so earnestly desired the key. Holy Scripture is wide and varied; there be the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, history, proverbial wisdom. On what was he engaged? Was he reading about the days of creation and the morning of the world? Was he reading the story of Abraham and the patriarchs, the acts of the Judges, or the wars of the Kings? Nay: but he was reading that which stirs the Christian spirit to the depths, and is associated with whatever is most sacred and dearest in our faith. If one of us, the household of the Lord, were asked to turn to the most solemn, the most affecting, the most precious chapter of the Old Testament, I think we

should find no difficulty in the choice. Even now the heart beats, and the eyes grow moist, on recalling what passage it was, which the poor gentile child of God was so patiently trying to study out. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before the shearer, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep are gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." O words most wondrous, most divine! Understandest thou what thou readest, O stranger and pilgrim here? Whosoever thou be, to-day, or any day, that readest, hast thou ever yet taken in the mystery that meets us here? Familiar as they are to us, often as we have heard them, or meditated on them before the cross, how little do we comprehend, as yet, of this which leaves the reason and the imagination far behind! "I pray thee," he asks, "of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of

some other man?" Neither of himself; nor yet of some other man. Of whom then? The human reason hath no answer for that question. There was no answer from the wilderness and the solitary place; nature hath no answer; science, none; philosophy, none. We are far away from finite bounds and natural limits. There was, perchance, no immediate reply from the minister of the Church: he may have bowed his head, a little while, in awe and adoration, discerning the end of the mission on which he had been sent. For a space there was silence, ere he broke the seal. And then, "he opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." For this name answers the question of the eunuch, the question of every one who would know the life, the truth, and the way, the desire of every earnest spirit. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

There are points, on the journey through life, at which one is fain to stop and look at what is before him, fixed, motionless, and satisfied, though hours should pass by. It is so, with this scene; here one might forget the world and its concerns, and realize the meaning of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come!" Who would not have been there, with Philip, that he might have drawn near to the chariot; and walked beside it, listening to the disciple as he read, and to the teacher as he gave the sense of the words? As for those words, what less can be said than this, adapting to the occasion another exquisite pas-

sage of that same prophet, that "the wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them, and the desert did rejoice and went nigh to blossom as the rose"?* For then the eyes of the blind were opened, and the ears of the deaf were unstopped. And the highway by which they two went together might well have been called the way of holiness: it was for those two, of a truth; the wayfaring man erred no longer therein. There also did the parched land become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; and in that wilderness, presently, did sacramental waters break out, for the baptism of him, who went down into the stream and laver of regeneration in the desert.

And here we come to a point of great importance. "I speak of Christ and the Church," † said the Apostle of the Gentiles. The head and the body are one. Take note, how the rites, the order, and the sacramental system, form integral, essential parts of the true preaching of Jesus Christ. Let us observe what followed. "Philip preached unto him the Lord Jesus." What does such preaching include? Many things; a system ordered above for our advantage; a complete circle of statements of the cause, manner, and instruments of human salvation; the object of faith, the acts required of faith, the means by which faith is enabled to do her perfect work. For "as they went on their journey, they came to a certain water:" it was, no doubt, some well-known road-side

*Isaiah xxxv. 1, 5, 7, 8.

† Ephes. v. 32.

spring or living fountain, shaded by trees, and resorted to by travellers for refreshment and repose. And at once, on seeing it, the eunuch cried, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Is there not much to be learned from that request? What could he have known about baptism? Why, when he saw the water, did he immediately allude to the first of the Sacraments of the Gospel, and ask that he might receive it without delay? Had he learned already to "believe in one baptism for the remission of sins?" He must have done so; he must have learned it from Philip; and the statement of the need and efficacy of Holy Baptism must therefore be an original part of the true preaching of Jesus Christ. Now this is most important to consider, when men make light of the ordinances and institutions of Christianity, and think them unnecessary, and speak of them as the inventions of the priesthood for superstitious uses. Not so. Here is a case, within a few days of the Ascension of the Lord and the First Pentecost, where it is as plain as it could be made, that Gospel preaching originally contained a reference to, and an insisting on, external sacramental forms and rites. So are the outer and the inner woven together, in the Holy Church, that each implies and needs the other, and it is sacrilege to part them. He who rightly preaches of the Church, does not cease to preach Jesus Christ: he who presents to faith the sacramental system, does not thereby diminish ought of the merits and glory of Jesus Christ.

Christ is in His Church ; Christ is in His appointed institutions ; Christ is everything, everywhere, and all in all. And this we may see from cases like the one before us ; when a stranger and a gentile, having heard of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and having learned the power of the Cross, must, at the same time, and in course of the same preaching, have learned the value of the means of grace. The connexion is direct and complete. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." * To believe, is to believe all. The faith which saves, if an intelligent faith, includes belief in the established instrumentalities whereby God works in us. Catholic Faith is not the selfish inner emotion of one mind which thinks its separate act the sum and substance of religion, and the sole condition to acceptance : but that calm and full concurrence in the whole of the grand system devised to lift men out of the evil of this present state, and to give them entire satisfaction in the pledge and promise of their heavenly inheritance.

This story ends, with the entrance, through the door of Holy Baptism, into the visible Church. "When they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more." It was the day of strange and marvellous things. He disappeared, even as Christ vanished from the sight of the two disciples at Emmaus ; as Elijah passed away from his friend, who cried aloud, meanwhile, "My father, my

* St. Mark xvi. 16.

father ! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Even here is instruction for us. The work of the ministry should have no personal respects. Its object is to bring, not man to man, but the sinner to the Saviour. When that is done, it may be best that personal ties should be severed, lest a pure intention and a perfect work be harmed by lower motive or mere earth-born affections. The work of the ministry shall be proved in the day when all human works shall be tried by fire. O may we meanwhile in naught contribute to bring confusion on our heads, by making self, in some form, our object, and neglecting to do everything to the sole glory of God !

Let us not omit, from time to time, to recall the scene which has now occupied our thoughts. Though it fade from the view, let its many teachings abide with us. They pass on, those two travellers ; the sound of the voices, the music of the words, grow faint and fainter in the distance ; the chariot, the equipage, the attendants recede, and become mere specks far away on the dim horizon, till like a vision and a dream they vanish altogether. But we may stand, as it were, in the spot where they passed us by, and recall what one would fix in the memory for the rest of his days. And since life is but a journey, and we but strangers and pilgrims here, let us greatly desire that messengers may meet us, with good words, as we fare onward ; that they may find us at all times ready to be taught and deeply intent on the great themes of religion. And although to some, the way may

seem like "Gaza which is desert," while winds of divers and strange doctrines blow about their ears, and shifting sands conceal the road, yet to patience, to faith, to humility, God shall send abundant reward, and above all other sounds shall be heard the voice of the spirit, bidding them search the scriptures, and showing them, as the beginning and the end, that Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

SERMON XXIV.

MAN NOT A DEBTOR TO THE FLESH.

ROMANS VIII. 12.

“ Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.”

A DEBTOR is one who owes somewhat to another ; it may be money, or goods, or service ; but for something is he held and bound, and the law requires that he meet and discharge the obligation. This word is used by St. Paul, in some strong words of his about the flesh. We are not debtors to the flesh, he says, so as to be held and bound to live after it. Now there are men who contradict the apostle’s statement, and loudly proclaim an opposite view ; and there are issues to this controversy which make it desirable to know what is held by the antagonists.

What is the flesh, that we should be debtors to it, to live after it ? To some extent, a man may be in debt to it, so far as it has a just and fair claim on him. But a wider obligation is implied in this phrase. To *live* after the flesh : to be bound to order the entire life after its laws, whatever they may be. Has the flesh any claim to the man, such as this ? Here is no question of some small

and manageable indebtedness, which perhaps might be discharged at little cost ; but the terms denote a large, heavy, and overwhelming obligation ; they suggest that old-world bondage, wherein a man, with all that he had, was at his creditor's mercy ; when debt tied a man up hand and foot, and cast him into prison till he should pay all that was due. What is the flesh, that any one should thus be bound to live after it ? And by what process of reasoning have men argued themselves into the notion that such an obligation exists ?

The term has not, of necessity, an evil sense. By the flesh may be meant human nature, as distinguished from the nature of angels, or of God. But here, no doubt, the flesh is the material frame of mortal man, that body which was made of the dust of the earth, and through which we are related to the lower animal world. It is the outward and visible sign of that sacramental being whom we call man. What is born into a material world, what moves and grows ; what is nourished by meat and drink, and is refreshed by sleep ; what flourisheth as the flower of the field, and returns at last to the earth : that is the flesh. Now to say that we are debtors to this, to live after it, is to maintain that its law should be the law of our life ; that the laws of the flesh constitute a code which it is man's first duty to obey. And that is the point about which the apostle and certain others among us are at odds. Let us ask, what are these laws of the Flesh ?

So far as man's researches extend, he finds every part

of God's creation under law ; there is some mandate which everything, if untrammelled, naturally obeys. Of many things, and of all in which rational choice and responsible will are lacking, it may be said, that their law is in themselves. It is so with the flesh. It has its laws within itself. The laws of the flesh are its natural motions and desires. Hunger is a law ; and thirst ; and weariness ; and every corporal demand. These laws are peremptory, as laws ought to be. The statute book does not contain a history of the law, nor an explanation of its scope, nor an assertion or defence of it, as just and reasonable ; it simply gives the law without note or comment ; obey, or take the consequences. Laws should be brief, clear, and peremptory. It is so with the laws of the flesh. They could not be more precise. If you hunger, eat. If you thirst, drink ; if you are tired, rest ; if you feel a desire, satisfy it ; if you crave a stimulus, take it. Whatever the flesh calls for must, if possible, be supplied. This is the law thereof. Do what the flesh bids ; obey when the flesh speaks ; enjoy what the flesh demands. Now the school of Epicurus, ancient and modern, represents men as bound to keep this law, and to live thereby. It makes a merit of such conformity : it applauds a life ruled in that way. It says that this is our duty, to follow nature and fulfil her will : that the voice of the flesh is the voice of nature ; that it is unnatural to cross nature ; that we should follow her leadings, without fear or doubt ; that no man should be held responsible for acceding to

desires innate in him, and forming, practically, a part of himself. The wisest, happiest, and most reasonable life—these persons say—is to follow our great mother Nature, as a child would follow a beneficent parent. For what else, they ask, is there save nature and ourselves? Taught by their master the Devil, they go on to say, that God and nature are the same; God is nature, and nature is God. The voice of nature is the voice of God: the laws of nature are the laws of God. Thus they speak, and thus were they speaking in those frightful days when the civilization of the old world was passing away; and the earth was drawing to destruction apace, and society, with its institutions, was sliding down towards an abyss of unutterable infamy, shame, and despair: when men, having the light of God on their brows, appeared, and called a halt, and said, “Brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die.” Then did God, by the hands of those men, build up a great dyke against the waves which were foaming out their own shame; it was called the Holy Catholic Church, and high upon it was set a Cross, with the figure of One who, certainly, in His day, was no debtor to the flesh. And since that time, the teachers of that low carnal philosophy have gone about among us like snakes, badly scotched, though not dead; nor shall God’s witnesses ever be lacking to expose their arts in corrupting consciences and poisoning human souls.

There breathes not on earth a man who is debtor to

the flesh, to live after the flesh ; and for this simple reason, that man is not all flesh, and that “ man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” * Man is not body only ; nor chiefly body ; nor is the law of the flesh the law of the whole man. He is flesh and spirit, in one. The motions of the flesh form one code ; there is another, the laws of an immaterial spirit and an immortal soul. Now if human nature were in a perfect state, equilibrium would be maintained throughout this complex being. But human nature is not in equilibrium, but in disorder, and confusion. We find in ourselves a continual warfare between the law of the flesh and the law of the spirit : it is ancient, irrepressible, everlasting. The spirit and the mind are ever in complaint against the body and the members ; and the complaint is retorted with interest. The mind says to the body, “ You are a clog, you weigh me down.” The spirit says to the flesh, “ But for you I could fly ; when shall I be free from these fetters of sense ? ” And the flesh answers back, promptly ; it accuses the mind and spirit of molesting it in its pleasures. “ I could eat, drink, and be merry but for you. But for your incessant checks, I could freely follow my own lower law. You have set up a watch on me, which they call conscience, and I cannot have my way, but it tells on me, spying me out with criticism and threats.” This striving of the spirit with the flesh, even in unregenerate

men, in every man in whom the consciousness of higher nature and the tendency upward are not yet extinguished,—this, I say, is the best known of all intellectual and moral phenomena. It is a witness to our royal descent, and our possible future coronation as masters of self and kings in immortal light and spiritual freedom: yet this is what the materialist contradicts. He assumes that the voice of this lower part of us is the voice of the real and proper man; as though a man were primarily and finally matter, and only accidentally and for a short space spirit and soul: as though we were only flesh, not flesh and spirit in one. But Christian philosophy and Christian theology tell a different story. They affirm, that the flesh is not the whole of human nature, nor is the voice of the flesh the voice of the full and entire man. If, in opposition to any demand of the flesh, there be but a low protest, but one low note of non-compliance, in mind, conscience, spirit, or soul, that is enough to destroy the assumption that to follow the law in the members is the natural, safe, and reasonable course. Our nature is a very complex thing. No man is safe, if in the complexity of motions and counter-motions, of springs and checks, of desire and counselled abstention, he rushes blindly forward, with no attempt to strike the balance between these variant forces, or to determine, amid these voices, which speaks from above and which from below. Each grand division of our nature has its laws. They certainly conflict. We must mediate be-

tween them, as a central intelligence and will. Each part has its rights ; each needs defence against the other's wrong. In securing to each its due, lies the trial of men. In the strife between the flesh and the spirit are the issues of life and death. God will bring every one into judgment, on this question, how he dealt with that battle, as it was fought within himsel

So this is our first position against Epicurus and his crew. The flesh is not the man. Its laws are not the laws of his entire being. It has its rights, indeed : but it cannot maintain a claim to supremacy. We have many an obligation ; all debts must be honestly paid. But it is not honest to rob one, that we may have wherewith to pay another. What you owe the flesh, pay ; but not out of that which you owe to the spirit.

A case which is so strong on the theoretic side, is even stronger on the practical. Any day's record suffices, by the loathsome, the horrible sights which are presented in this world, to give judgment for the apostle against his opponents. What has the flesh done for us, that we should be under obligations to live after it ? Debtors to it alone ? Debtors to it first, and to reason and conscience next ? Why ? and how ? What kind of a staff is this to lean upon ? It is no staff, it is but a hollow reed, like those that the fairy stories describe, filled with poison, which exudes on pressure, unobserved. I see men who have leaned on it, and I see torn and lacerated hands, with the flesh festering, where the wretched thing broke. What

are the solid advantages derived from living to the flesh ? The results provoke disgust and shame, where this problem is worked out consistently, by men who believe what they say. The laws of the flesh are few, and plain. He who holds that he is a debtor to them, and is fair about it, and resolves to pay what he owes, is a most important person, and invaluable by way of illustration of the theory, which only needs such an interpreter, to disclose its ghastly nature. As for the commentaries on this noted statute, commended to us as so innocent, right and expedient ; are they not written in the criminal calendars and in the registers of police courts ? Or if men and women of a better class take the witness stand, is it not to the same vile conclusions that we come ? “ Eat, drink, and be merry : ” that is a primary law of the flesh. Do full honor to that law, and you go below the brutes ; as any one must know, who has seen men after a carouse, some babbling like fools, some maudlin, some ugly and dangerous, and some flat on the floor, unconscious. It is the flesh which has been paid in full by the debtor. There is another carnal appetite, which also is peremptory ; and, in bondage to that law, how many hearts have been broken, how many young lives have been blasted, in how many souls has the light of purity and chastity been extinguished forever ! There are men, young in years, but wrecked, wasted, evil through and through, having the curse on their limbs, and, (let us hope, for unless it be there, the case is hope-

less,) "a fearful looking for of judgment,"* which yet may bring to "godly sorrow."† There are graves in the church yards, where, under the grassy mounds, lie accursed bones, full of the sin of youth, which has gone down with them into the dust."‡ God, in the beginning, made his intelligent creatures male and female, and imposed on them a law of temperance, soberness, and chastity. God said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see Me." But blighting, and bitterness, and miseries that no power of language could exaggerate, have come of breaking in upon all this, and making of the lust of the flesh a law which must be indiscriminately obeyed. I knew many years ago, a man who spoke after this fashion of the laws of nature, and thought himself in the right in obeying; and, one day, I heard of him, dead by his own hand; nor was it a strange or illogical conclusion. He who makes this fallen nature his first object, must live in sin; and the wages of sin is death.

So might one go the rounds and study the results of admitting that we are debtors to the flesh. But you say, perhaps, of instances such as have been hinted at, that they are extreme. It is true; and it is right to study extreme cases, first, because it is only among the extremes that we can find one really honest man; men who have, as it is said, the courage of their convictions. Your smooth and respectable philosopher is not honest; he secretly mistrusts his own theory; he dares not work

* Hebrews x. 27.

† 2 Cor. viii. 10.

‡ Job xx. 11.

it out, for he knows well where he would land, in the gutter or in the sty. So that we must look, not to him, but to those disciples of his, who work out the problem and demonstrate the very inwardness of his teaching. There are proofs enough before extremes are reached; and the best man here may ask, equally with those inferior to him, what ever came to him of trifling with the flesh, and why it should hold him to be its debtor? No hour but it is apt to deceive us; it will deceive to the end. Craving incessantly; demanding more, the more we give; exacting and remorseless; feeding on the nobler part of the nature, and draining out the life of the soul; this flesh, which, though fair in the morning, may ere night be dried up and withered; which pales and grows sallow, and fades away; which breaks on the thin stem of its vitality, and falls where the foot shall tread it down: I would ask you, brethren, as fellow travellers over the solemn main of this mortal life, to look upon the sight before you, and duly consider it; to discern between the flesh and the spirit, to note the strife within you, between those rival principles,—not rival originally, but maddened into rivalry and open hostility by the presence of your sin—to contrast your irregular desire (and you must have such,) for anything which attracts your gaze, to contrast that, I say, with the deeper wishes of your soul for the incorruptible, the enduring, the immortal joys; and then to say, from your own experience, whether the stern apostle of the early Church is not the guide whom you

should follow. Besides all other arguments against the fleshly philosophy, there is one in every man's consciousness. A voice is there, reminding him that he was made for better things ; chiding him if he wavers in loyalty to God ; pursuing him with reproaches if he fall, and striving to renew him unto repentance ; a voice ready to prove from the history of others like himself, that whosoever liveth after the flesh shall die, and that all who *have* lived after the flesh *are* dead. In a convent in Old Spain, there used to hang (and perhaps it is still hanging there,) a very awful picture. It represented two bodies lying side-by-side in a charnel : the one was that of a Bishop in his robes, the other that of a full armored knight of Alcantara. But the vestments of the clergyman were moth-eaten and corrupt, and the soldier's panoply was rusted, and over both, and in and out, crept many a serpent and foul tenant of the grave. Above was a hand, coming forth as out of a pale amber cloud ; it pointed downward through the silence and misery of death. What fool were he that could hold us debtors to that sad corruption, that we should live thereby, and end with that ? And what but insanity itself could hope to make us men, in this world of change and sorrow, believe such a thing in our inner hearts ?

No, brethren, we are not debtors to this flesh ; to the body of this death. The apostle must be right. No man is debtor to it, to spend his life in its service. We are debtors to it thus far : we owe it maintenance, care,

and support. But we owe it no indulgence. We owe it due consideration, so long as it is well-behaved. But if it grow unruly, we owe it a watchful eye, a tight rein, and a firm hand. Be just here, as everywhere. "Owe no man anything." Owe the flesh nothing. Be its master; let it in no wise be thine. Be true to it, for it is God's work also. See that it have what is honestly its due: see that it be kept in its right. But if it try rebellion against the law of God and His Church—waste no words, lose no time, try no compromise; but put it down.

A Christian's life is a middle way between an irreligious laxity and a false asceticism. He shuns that luxury which surfeits and gluts the flesh, and gives it whatever it asks, because the end would be to strangle the spirit and sink it under the weight of a gross materialism, where God could never recover His own. He shuns that asceticism which, holding the body to be essentially evil, would flagellate, macerate, and starve it, till it should be defaced beyond recognition, as in the case of the old solitaries, whose hair grew like eagles' feathers, and their nails were like birds' claws, who became frightful spectacles of dirt, squalor, and scars: for that would be to make of life one long penance, and of man the tenant of a prison, and to shut us up in an unnecessary banishment from the earth, which is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; beating life out against cruel bars, and longing for release in death. These, the extremes to which men have run in their error, are reconciled by the spirit of the

gospel, and the example of Christ, the Saviour of us and of our life. Let the body grow, and let the soul grow, and let the spirit grow. All are of God. All make up one man. All were redeemed by Christ. All are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. He who made, and redeemed, and sanctified them, shall teach us how to guard what are His rather than ours. They are ours, as His gift. They are ours, like our wills, to make them His. We are debtors, not to them, but to Him.

SERMON XXV.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

2 COR. V. 14.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.”

THERE are hours in life, when, forced by some urgent pressure on the soul, a man asks and insists on knowing what is the final basis on which his religion stands; when he feels that he must dig to the very root of the matter, that it is time to unwrap himself, to take off layer after layer of the swathings of circumstance, and find out what is really underneath, deep down, so far that nothing remains undisclosed. One may go on for years, content, though such an investigation has never taken place; content with things as they appear; or, if not quite content, persuaded at least, since the surface is smooth, that the depths are pure. Work may be so pressing, that it seems to leave time for nothing else; and though deeper wants are felt, and a suspicion of perfect sincerity may trouble the conscience, yet one says to himself, in the conventional phrase, *Laborare est orare*, or, “I do what I can,” and so, for the time, makes peace within. But

there are questions which cannot go forever unanswered. If some shock be given to the sense of security ; if sight or sound impress upon us the vanity of life, and plainly tell the nearness of the end ; if, in the collision of those opinions of which the world is full, some utterance arouses and startles, first setting a man to thinking, and then compelling him to tell himself *what* he is thinking : then may he have to come to this, and say to himself : " What, really, is in me ? To what may my religion be finally reduced ? I pass among others for a Christian ; *what* is this religion of mine ? Journeying towards death, the grave, and the world to come, what is the light by which I am walking ? What distinguishes me, in the eye of my God, from other men, who also profess religion, and might be called to give an account of their faith ? "

It is a question, this, about the analysis of our Christian profession ; about the last and final analysis, and the result to which it leads. And, first, it may be remarked, that there is nothing unreasonable in the idea that such an investigation should be made ; it is a strictly scientific process, the same which is carried on, in other fields of inquiry, with valuable results. Indeed we may say, that without such a process, there could be no true philosophy of religion : for philosophy is the knowledge of things by their causes ; and in this case, a man wants to know just what is the last and final cause of his work and acts as a Christian man.

Let us illustrate what it is proposed to do. Take, for

example, the Sacraments of the Church. Each is ministered with adornments and accretions, impressive but not essential. In Holy Baptism we have a font, often beautiful to the eye, and there are prayers of divers kinds, and sponsors, and promises, and pledges, and certain signs and acts: but these are not of the essence of the sacrament; analyze it, and it comes down, at the very last, to water applied in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:—I speak, of course, only of the outward and visible part. In the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, there are ceremonies, with more or less of ritual adjuncts, hymns new and old, an altar with its ornaments, and divers other things apt to kindle the fancy and impress the worshipper: but analyze it, and you come at last to Bread and Wine, and the words of institution said by a priest. Now in that same way analyze your religion; drive the question down, through everything, till you come at last to what is the final reality within your own spirit and your own heart. Find out what are the actual contents of your heart; what is there beneath all else. Obviously you may proceed by the same process of exclusion. You are here to-day, as a worshipper, one professing and calling yourself a Christian, in this stately church: but your religion is not in these walls and stones: were they to be cast down, and were the ploughshare to pass through their present site, your religion would not have been touched; you have what you could carry to some sim-

pler shrine, or keep under the open sky, or in dens and caves of the earth. You worship God to-day in the language of an ancient and time-honored liturgy: it is solemn and sweet to the ear; it is not your religion; a book is not the final analysis of your Christianity, any more than a material edifice; forms might perish, but what is in your heart would live still. The same principle may be applied to those outward activities of life which bear a distinct religious impress, or aim at religious ends. You do Church work; you teach the young; you give alms; you help to keep up the institutions of religion. Still, we have not got at the root of the matter: I have known hypocrites who did the same things, and seemed to do them well. Grant that you interest yourself very much in religious subjects; that you serve on boards and committees; that your name appears on many a list of managers, trustees, and stewards of God's treasure: a question comes up, why you do these things? This may be the result of a natural activity, which, thanks to good principle, turns to worthy and noble pursuits; to a sense of the value of religion, and an instinctive relish for what is pure and lovely and of good report. You are strictly moral; you abstain from evil; you do virtuous actions. It is well; but we must not forget the pagan virtues practiced by heathen moralists; nor yet that many who do not believe in Christ, and some who appear to believe in nothing, are yet unexceptionable in their conduct and behavior, and show natural

virtues, well pleasing to the eye. You give much alms perhaps, and are kind to your fellow-men. Yet some have done as much as you, or more, of mere pity and tenderness, not believing that there is any future life.

No ; we have not yet got at the thing which makes the Christian. We have but skimmed the surface. Down below there must be something else ; the secret spring, the motive, the final cause, the reason why. It is not knowledge ; it is not activity in good work ; it is not culture ; it is not the relish of the lovely externals of the Christian faith. Nor is it abstinence and self-denial, or liberality in charities, or sweetness of temper, or skill, or aptitude, or magnetism, or enthusiasm. It is nothing that the bodily eye can see. A man may well and truly declare and confess : “ I know I have not yet reached that last, that final cause, that thing within me, which, so far as I myself am concerned, makes me a Christian inwardly and in very truth and fact ; without which I am but a Christian outwardly, a name, but not the substance which the name denotes. I dare not trust to aught which I have reached thus far. I know there is, there must be, something else. The world spreads its nets of temptation on every side : I am not taken and snared in them. Why ? Duties are suggested, day by day ; I fulfil them. Why ? All turns on the answer to that question. By that *why*, and that wherefore, I stand or fall in God’s sight. I should stand or fall in the sight of my neighbors, if they could see and read me through. In that little word, that momentous

‘Why,’ lies the key to the story of my active life.”—It is thus that many a one has mused with himself, at the declining of the day or of the year, when the world seems gathering up shadow from all solitudes about it, when the causes of things are sought with intense anxiety to know the truth. And, thus placed, man is in front of one of the deepest questions that can be moved in theology, with the deepest question in practice, before which every other fades away.

Now, to make no half-way work with this matter, the facts are simply as follows :

Out of the past, out of the ages which time, in its flight, has left behind, out of the tingling silence of what seems to us like a gone and departed eternity, there looks a Human Face. It is the Face of a Man like ourselves. It is the Face of a Person in the direct line of the generations of the human race. It is the Face of One who lived here, long, long ago, and is known to us through biographies, whose accuracy has never been disproved. He, whose Face thus looks upon us from the past, was, during His earthly pilgrimage, an object of the love and trust of devoted friends. It is not now the question what He did to draw them to Him and hold them true ; the mere fact suffices for my purpose, that He made them love Him, and that in time their love, constraining them, became the leading principle of their lives, the explanation of their thoughts, words, and deeds. I said, that Face looks on us from the past. Nay, more. Eigh-

teen or nineteen centuries have rolled away ; a very long time. The Face has not disappeared. All that while, it has been distinctly seen. It has been seen by a sight more keen than that of the bodily eye. It is so beheld to-day. The Face looks on us in the present, and here ; and through the very air which we are breathing in this place. It is close by us. It looks on us from yonder altar ; from these arches above us ; from every point to which the eye can turn. And in Him is no change ; He is the same yesterday and to-day. He deserves the same love from us which they gave Him of old ; the same implicit trust ; the same absolute devotion. Men may love Him now, as well as then ; here, as they did in Syria, in the cities of Judah, and in the beautiful Galilee. And each of us in turn must face the question, whether he has in his heart the love of Him whose name was and is JESUS CHRIST. And when he comes to that question, he has reached the last, the very end : he has at length a test by which to prove whether his religion, whatever it be, deserves to be called Christian, or ought to go by some other name.

The Christian religion, pushed to the last and final analysis, comes down to this, so far as man's conscious and responsible part and share in it is considered : it is the love of the individual for the personal Founder of his religion ; the attachment of the heart and soul to Him whose name and work have changed the whole face of the earth. I seek not now to move you to

that love, by appeals of any kind, but to set the fact before you as a subject of reflection and a head for self-examination. There be many religions in the world. The Christian religion is based on the personal love of Jesus Christ. Other systems, having some other principle, may not be without value; they may be compared with Christianity: but nothing can be rightly called Christianity unless it begin, continue, and end in the love of Christ; nor can any one be held to be the Christian that he is called, unless the moving spring, the motive, the main cause of what he does and what he is, be that same personal love of Jesus Christ.

Now, having made this statement, much remains to be done: unexplained, it might be horribly abused. Do we mean to say, that so long as a man makes boast that he loves the Lord, he needs no more? that a sentiment, a passion, in man, sums up everything? Far be it from us to deprave so shockingly the foundation principle of our religion. Fanaticism is the reverse of faith.

Love is the root in us. But what is meant by that? Love is something more than respect, or reverence, or admiration. These have been given to the founders of human systems; to kings, to patriots, to teachers and sages, to the world's benefactors. No doubt you can think back into history and say of many there, "I love them." You love such an author, or such a musical composer, or such a sweet character of the long ago. You love them with a human love; yea, with a love

which is very tender and may sometimes move you deeply as you muse of them. That human passion does but begin to express the love which must centre in Jesus Christ. That mere rude beginning must be filled out, and grow ; outgrow its carnal nature, and become a higher thing. If, by loving Jesus Christ, we mean that we love Him as example, as ideal, as sufferer, as martyr, merely ; only as we love some whose pictures hang on our walls, whose works are our frequent study ; we should have come to a lame and impotent conclusion. The world would have no quarrel with us, for such a devotion ; that would not interfere with other loves for other lords, nor could we justly criticise those who, unable to admire our model sufficiently, should profess themselves unable to share our attachment for it. The claim of Christ is to love ; to a love complete, final, and in its own sphere exclusive ; to a love for which one is ready to suffer and might dare to die. But that claim is unreasonable, except on one presumption, and unpractical unless attested in one way.

It is unreasonable unless we admit the Divinity of the object of that love :

It is unpractical unless we insist on implicit obedience to His commands.

Unless Christ be God over all, blessed for evermore, to call on us to love Him in a way so exclusive as to make that love the supreme motive of action, is irrational to the last degree. You can conceive of an attachment

to an object only thought of as far away. That is an ideal and imaginative affection; it has no living faith in it, nor can it result in active outcome. But Christ is not far away; He is here, among us; no shadow of old time, but a present, living, and everlasting Saviour. He is this, by virtue of the fact that in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Love for Him must be a solemn, an awful sentiment; far above the level of human passion; going down to the depths, holding life gathered up into it, because it is a conscious devotion to One in whom we feel that we live and move and have our being.

And again, such a love as this must hush questionings, and kill self-will, and incline to undoubting, unhesitating submission to His word. No such lover dare for one instant argue with Him, criticise His sayings, or stop to consider whether he will or will not do as he is bidden. In a word, the love of Christ demanded of us men is only rational when it is directed to Christ as God, and only practical when proved by obedience to Christ as Lord and King.

And hence arises the confusion felt by some who listen to what is said about us on this subject. There are, in fact, a true and a pretended love. Even as Christ may be preached, as in St. Paul's time, of envy and contention; even so there is a love of Christ which ends only in deeper love of one's self. When Christ is loved, because His name has been an instrument for the magnifying of one's personal ideas and intensifying one's pecu-

liarities, the love is a pretence, a profanation, and a parody. No love of Christ is true, unless it begin and end in discipline of self for Christ's sake, in repressing one's own wisdom and pride, in resigning what is dearest to the natural heart, in strictly obeying His word and His law. And this test serves, not only for persons outside, who confuse us with their mighty professions, but also for ourselves, when we doubt whether after all we really love our Master. They love Him, who do all for His love, and stop, for the love of Him, the moment they know or suspect that they may be walking where He does not approve. "If ye love Me," he said, "keep My commandments." That, after all, is the surest test. And when we see a pure, humble, and holy life, bearing the deep clear imprint of a self-denial, which we know and feel to bespeak a profound reverence for our blessed Lord, there can be no doubt what is there. True as it is, that the outward is nothing apart from the inner constitutive principle, and that a handsome mask may hide an ugly heart; yet there are exteriors so lovely in a certain special loveliness, that it would be treason to doubt what power has wrought to consecrate and glorify such temples of the Holy Ghost.

Be not confused over much by the presumptuous voices to which I referred. There is much of the sentimental and the sensational, here and there, in what may be called religious circles; yet after all our danger lies not in that direction. We are in peril of loving Him too little,

not of loving Him too much. We all need more, very much more, of this personal devotion and attachment to Him. We ought to learn, from our love for those dearest to us here on earth, how to love Him in heaven. Be not afraid to show Him the emptiness and coldness of your heart ; do so, that the void may be filled. Ruinous may be the tenement of your soul ; ask Him to repair it. Great may be your poverty ; ask him to enrich it. Open your heart to Him, desiring that the love which you need may be poured into it, and verily you shall be filled.

SERMON XXVI.

GOD'S NEVER-FAILING PROVIDENCE.

ST. LUKE xii. 6.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God."

MUCH has been said of the difficulties of our religion, on its dogmatic side; and men have thought it would be easier to be Christians, if they could let theology go, and limit themselves to the practical part of the matter. When told that He who was born of the Virgin Mary was the same God by whom in the beginning all things were made, and by whom all things still consist, they exclaim, "This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" When invited to believe that visible sacramental rites form links of connection between heaven and earth, and bind us mortals to the throne of God, they cry, "This is too much to require; let us leave such things, and go to the practical; to what concerns the daily work of life, to reality and virtue; there it is plain and easy, and not break-neck travelling among those stumbling-blocks, the Creeds." Is it then so? Are the difficulties which men affect to dread confined to

the dogmatic side ? Is the practical side of our holy religion clear of them ? Nay, hear first what the Lord says in the text ; and then ask, whether it be easier to accept what He told us of God's providence, and His relations to His vast creation, than to believe what is written about the method of redemption, and the sacramental union of men with the Word-made-Flesh.

Whenever a vital truth was to be stated, it seems to have been our Blessed Lord's way to put it in the plainest possible terms, as if to make His meaning so clear that no one could misunderstand it, and to save His children from being misled afterwards by persons who might take advantage of ambiguity to explain away the truth. Christ's words, whether relating to matters of belief or matters of practice, are like citadels of defence, shielding the devout hearer from the strife of tongues and the discords of opinion. This statement has that quality. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings ? and not one of them is forgotten before God." The little creature mentioned is one of the most insignificant that could be thought of ; and the Lord selected it, just for that utter insignificance, to bring out thereby a truth which overwhelms the reason. He took out of His immense universe, an object so poor, so small, that nothing could be less important, to illustrate the doctrine on which the system of Christian morals is built ; and the truth is this: that God is in intelligent relation with everything that exists ; that there are, practically, no limits to his providence ; that in the uni-

verse nothing is so minute as to be overlooked or forgotten. "*Not one of them is forgotten.*" It is a striking phrase ; other words may be found like this, elsewhere ; but, none to equal it in breadth and extent. In this very place, *e. g.*, He adds, and says, "The hairs of your head are all numbered." That is a marvel, a miracle of knowledge. But more than knowledge is in the phrase, "not forgotten." It implies a knowledge which lasts, though the thing known may no longer exist ; care, consideration, particulars retained in the faithful memory. And in the ephemeral history of the poor little bird, of which the great God and Saviour deigned to speak, not one item is forgotten ; each tiny creature's life, in all its extent, is seen, and known, and borne in mind by Him to whom it owes that life. Now here is a truth, which may be called the beginning of the moral law, the foundation of Christian ethics, the Alpha and Omega of Christian practice. Is this easy to accept ? Is it really harder to believe any of the advanced dogmas of theology, than simply and humbly to believe this ? There can be no reasonable doubt that this is the way in which we are taught to think about our God. Not only is it declared again and again in the plainest words ; it is implied in the whole history of God's dealings with men as given in the scriptures. "I know all the fowls upon the mountains : and the wild beasts of the field are in my sight."* Watch the flight of birds, when in long flocks they cross the sky, going from north to

* Psalm l. 11.

south, or back again, in their seasons of migration ; each creature in those countless tribes is known, as if by name, to its Creator. When locusts dim the sun, sweeping, cloud-like and destructive, from plain to plain, not one is confused with another in the view of God. Where the wind blows on the hills of rustling grass, every blade is numbered in that sight which nothing can escape. And these things are true, not in the present hour only, but in the whole day, and in the whole year, and in all ages, one by one ; so has it been, so is it, so shall it ever be. Is this then an easy doctrine ? Is there no difficulty here ? It is not one of the hated dogmas ; it belongs to the practical side of religion ; it is that truth without which the practical breaks completely down. Men may accept it, without accepting the dogmatic statements of the Nicene Creed or the sacramental system. Only, we ask: if any can and does accept this, what is there, after it, too difficult for him to accept ?

Dear brethren, men speak of the difficulties of religion ; the real difficulty seems to be, not in believing this truth with all one's heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, but in not having such a truth to live by. The doctrine of the never-failing providence of Almighty God is the sheet-anchor of man's safety. But that doctrine, to be real, must be so presented, that nothing shall be left which it does not take in. The providence ; the knowledge ; the unforgetting, all-remembering, perpetual vision ; must cover the entire life of each creature, and all the things

that live, and all that has been and shall be. A limited providence, a restricted, partial, or incomplete providence; these are absurd phrases. A God who sees and knows great things, but cannot discern little ones; it is a contradiction in terms. "All things" in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, "are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do;*" not to believe this, is practically, to be left without God in this world or the next.

Now that the truth has been stated, it might be in order to speak of the errors of which it is the corrective; to relate how there were those of old among the heathen, who thought that the gods cared nothing for the world and had nothing to do with us men; and others who, though they might allow for God's interposition in great affairs, considered it beneath Him to trouble Himself about such small ones, as the fall of a little bird to the ground, or the grief of a child, or the deep sighing of a poor man; and then might I go on to proofs, from the scriptures, that such thoughts of God were wrong. But there is better work to do than to be stripping the clothes from heathen error, or heaping up texts against it. That this is the Christian doctrine; that the Lord taught it so plainly as to tax the resources of illustration in making it clear; that the apostles preached it at Athens, at Lystra, and up and down the world, still pointing the people to that God who created the heavens and the earth, and

* Hebrews iv. 13.

is not far from any one of us ; that it is the basis of practical Christianity : all this we assume as demonstrable from the New and Old Testament. Let us now ask of the application to us and to our life.

What does that mean to you, which the Lord said, about God's not forgetting one of the sparrows sold in the market places of Jerusalem ? That it means something to you, is a matter of course ; all His words are living words, shafts aimed at a mark. It means, what you may be as reluctant to think about, as you are to accept it. The doctrine of God's providence is, at first, as terrible to contemplate as it is hard to realize ; no one can bear to think of it, no one willingly admits it, who is leading an evil life. Consider that case first. To take account of but a single day : it means that there is nothing about you, or in you, or of you, but God knows and sees it all ; the thoughts of your heart, the springs and motives of your acts, the vices of your blood. All you have, all you are, all you do, is His property, and already in His possession, though you care little for Him and are not a practical Christian. He spieth out all your ways. He understandeth your thoughts long before you think them. Yesterday, for example, He saw you when your eyes first opened to the light of your vain, perhaps your sinful day, and traced your steps on your journey till they closed once more in sleep. You know what you did ; and he also knows ; some things you prefer to forget or wish that you could forget them ; God does not

forget. You cannot escape. You may think yourself unobserved; you hope you are when some one of your many bad actions is in hand; there are things about your life which you carefully conceal, ashamed or afraid to have them known: all the while you are actually standing in the concentrated blaze of a light brighter than the brightness of the sun, and eyes that see everything are reading you through and through. Then, also, those eyes sweep the entire circumference of the sphere in which you move; they see your friends and your foes, the tempting spirits which allure you, the guardians set for your defence; they mark the rise of the storms, as yet no bigger than a man's hand, which are coming up against you, and see, beyond, the sunshine which, after many days, may break out once more. You, just as you are, stand now before God, and simply for what you are, since there is no deceiving Him. O vain man, O foolish woman, remember, there is no privacy anywhere for you, though you long for it, and even live on as if you had it. Your follies and vanity, your erring steps, your ugly temper and evil disposition, your doubts of what is good, your secret relish for the badness of the world, the emptiness of your existence, which seems to have in it neither high aim nor holy aspiration, your false tongue and honey-combed soul; these can you not keep to yourself: He knows, and forgetteth not; you are read like a book by the reader of the lives of us men.

Yes, God sees us, wherever we go, whatever we do.

Nothing is forgotten. He could tell you every idle word you ever spoke ; every oath that has fallen from your lips ; every vile action ; though to you these seem buried long since in the grave of oblivion ; every dollar you have wasted in mere luxury or folly, every prayer of unhappy supplicant which you have dismissed, every influence you have exerted, apt to lead a brother or sister astray. You may not feel this ; it may have no governing influence over you ; if so, the startling fact comes out, that one great moral force, heretofore, and still, potent to lead the unrighteous back to God, has lost its power over you. If the thought of God's presence does not turn you to God, you must have ceased to believe in God, in the way that works spiritual and moral transformations in men. But what a horrible discovery, that you are where God can no longer reach your conscience, your heart ! This is a truth, which saves men, one by one, and men together in the mass. It is the moral lever, by which the Church moves the world ; without this the world cannot be moved, nor lifted up, nor purified. But yet, it has no power over you, O wretched man ! Who then has led you astray ? Who has seduced you into exchanging this truth of God's special and perpetual providence for the atheistic tenet of impersonal law and unintelligent force ? An enemy hath done this ; the enemy of your soul ; the enemy of that God in whom you live and move and have your being. Take heed ; come back ; for there is nothing in front of you but death, un-

less you repent. Where the doctrine of God's providence has been generally rejected, it is only a question of time till that come to pass again which once occurred, when all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth, and God saw that the wickedness of man was great and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. If communities are defiled, if the social order is imperilled, if men are shocked at the growing ravages of sin, and souls are ravined, and ruined one by one, we trace these portents to their sole cause, the losing sight of the fact that God's eye is on us alway, and that we are accountable to Him for what we do.

You say, this is a stern and terrible truth. And so it is; but there is another side to the picture; let us turn to that for reassurance, nay for the deepest comfort and peace that mortal man can know. This truth of God's never-failing providence is awful indeed to those who know Him not, nor have Him in their thoughts; but to those who are near Him, and love to set Him ever before them as the Father and the Saviour, it is more precious than words can tell. To such it serves three purposes: it gives them guidance; it gives them strength; it gives the sense of safety. It shows them what they ought to do; it assures them of success; it blesses with the blessing of peace.

Think of your life, and your deepest wants. You need a check upon you, and a hand to keep you straight; you have it in your faith that God sees and knows all. You

cannot go far wrong, when checked by that reflection. The sense of His nearness is a moral force, a thousand fold greater than any other that can be named. But His nearness and His providence are, practically, one and the same thing. He who thinks thus of his God is ever putting to himself the question whether God approves what he is about at any given moment. That saves him ; it acts as a constant check ; it is a lantern to his feet, a light to his paths, a bridle to his lips : and God knows we all need to be so held in.

Again : you need encouragement in good work. Who would not fail, who thought himself alone ? But to feel that God is near, and working with us, gives an impulse, a force which nothing else can impart ; the force required for long, steady, earnest work. He who is sure that God sees, approves and keeps, will work with his whole heart, and the progress of that work is from one triumph to another. His faith is the inspiration of mighty deeds, the warrant against everlasting failure.

And, finally, from this belief in God's providence comes whatsoever man can know of entire peace and rest in this troublesome world. Every lover of God is entitled to a sweet assurance. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," said the Master. If one of them cannot fall to the ground unnoticed by our Father, how much more in His thoughts are we, His children, made in His likeness, redeemed by His own blood ! What should there be for us each day and hour, but watchful, tender love ?

That is the other side of the picture, and it shines in lovely light. If our sins are before Him, so also are our humble attempts to do right, our desires to win His approval, and regrets when we fear that we have failed. He follows us with merciful and tender consideration. When we go forth, the strong Hand is there to sustain us as we walk, and lead us through peril in safety. When we come in, the faithful guardian opens to us, and bids us rest in the quietness of perfect love and trust. We see Him in each event of life, and in the smallest particulars of each day, as the Friend who is near us all the time; we find Him in our rising up and in our lying down, in the home and its pure joys, in the loving faces there; we bless Him as the author of every innocent pleasure; when the heart is glad, we know that what filled it so full is the habitual sense that God is in our happiness, as the author and giver: all is of Him, and to Him do we give thanks. When we take up our daily work, it is with a song in the heart, because He worketh with us and will show us how our work should be done; and when we lay it down, it is with quiet satisfaction, because He has seen all, and remembers, and knows that though we may not have been perfect, we did what we could. His Holy Spirit, called the "Paraclete," the "Comforter," and the "Loving Spirit," is ever near us, and even within, since these mortal bodies are His consecrated temples; and the musical sounds often heard in the soul, like songs without words, are the voice of that spirit, telling our

spirit of the love of God for us and the reward of love for Him. To a man who leads his life away from God, the past is a horrible abyss, empty and silent; nothing is there, but lost things and dead relics. To one who has loved and lived for God, the past is a rich treasure house, a sunny landscape, because God remembers: the past is held secure in that everlasting remembrance, and the servant is rich in what it holds. And as for the years in front, they also are secure. Come what else may, *this* this can never come: one moment, one instant when we shall be left alone, uncared for, friendless orphans. That is the conviction which inspired the burning words:

“My heart triumphant joy hath found,
It thrills at Thy sweet gospel's sound,
And feels Thy life unending.
Keep me with Thee, ever cleaving,
Never leaving,
Dear and dearer,
As my soul to Thee draws nearer.”

Dear brethren: its own reward follows on just and righteous doing; its reward follows surely on faith. I have spoken to you of a great Christian doctrine: I would have you to think of it as a wonderful, an incredible mystery, as difficult to believe as any dogma of the catholic creed. But it is a glorious truth; unspeakably rich in every thing that truth can give; strong to us for warning, help, and comfort. Lay hold of it, believe it: not languidly, as if it were a thing which everybody

knows and accepts. They do not ; men are horribly confused about it, half or three-quarters skeptical about it, unwilling to state it positively and fully,—but resolve that you must and will believe it, in the length, and breadth, and depth, and height ; that you will take it into a loving heart, just as it fell from those lips that can neither exaggerate nor deceive. Do this, and great shall be your reward : it shall come to you along the three lines of warning, help, and comfort : the assurance of the Providence that never faileth, and never forgetteth, shall bring to you as its fruit, these precious results :

A sober and awful sense of responsibility ;

A check and salutary restraint on action ;

A courage and energy above natural force ;

A constant sense of the divine companionship ;

A transfiguration of your entire life ;

And, for the future, a settled restfulness and peace, the harbingers of eternal satisfaction in the likeness of Him whom now His children see by faith, but whom they shall know hereafter even as they are known.

SERMON XXVII.*

THE CONFESSION OF SAINT PETER.

ST. MATTHEW XVI. 13-18.

“ When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

THE sciences taught among men begin with axioms, or definitions, without which no start can be made. Something is first laid down to which assent is demanded without proof, which is self-evident, which must be conceded by reasonable people: from that, the rest proceeds in logical order. It is thus also, in religion. There are points of departure, fundamental propositions, about which controversy, though possible, is fruitless; and from these a system is evolved, naturally and as matter of course. Such are, for example, the brief, dogmatic statements of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, regarding His Person,

* This Sermon was preached in St. John's Memorial Chapel, Cambridge, Mass., June 15, 1881, at the Commencement of the Episcopal Theological School.

His Offices, the meaning of His Life among us, the effects of those Acts which He performed. Men may, indeed, dispute about those sayings, from one generation to another ; but with no better result than that which came of the arguing of the fallen angels, who

“ found no end, in wand’ring mazes lost.”

The words of Christ, to which I now refer, stand in theology somewhat as axioms do in science. Men must admit them, or they are at sea ; they must admit them without other question than this, whether He did really speak them ; and on these, as on a basis laid by the hand of God and not by man, stands the religion which bears His name. Now, it is about these axiomatic expressions that the controversies rage ; men do not quarrel over the ethical teachings, or the parables, or what is picturesque and merely historical in the gospels ; but the battles are about certain words which shock our intellectual pride, or make drafts on faith, or set limits to our action, or challenge submission without giving a reason or vouchsafing an explanation. When, for instance, Christ saith, “ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,”* some ask, “ Why couple thus an outward ceremony and the all-sufficient act of faith ?” And when he saith, “ Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you,”† many, rightly taking His words as He spake them, go back and refuse to walk with Him. Men are consistent

* St. Mark xvi. 16 ; St. John iii. 5.

† St. John vi. 53.

in making what fight they can against such and like words, for an entire religion is in them, a religion which calls them to surrender heart, thought, will, act, and everything, to God. It was inevitable that battle should wax hot and hotter around these hard sayings, which divide the very joints and marrow.* It is natural that we should regard with absorbed interest the passages in Holy Scripture which contain these germs, these axioms of the supernatural system. One reads with awe; he draws on, through the easier places, with a deepening sense of mystery and dread. It is as if the Lord, at such times, were seated as our teacher in His Holy Temple, while apostles, evangelists and doctors bade all the earth keep silence before Him.

In this spirit I invite you to consider the scene at Cæsarea Philippi. Evidently something of an uncommon nature was transacted then and there. We are like men bidden to the laying of a corner stone; it is the corner stone of a "dominion which shall not pass away and a Kingdom which shall not be destroyed."† Every word, every syllable, has weight. What Christ asks of the men who attend Him, and to whom He is about to commit the work of evangelizing the world, He does not ask merely as one who would beguile the time with conversation, or is curious to learn the views of companions. He has another design; a reason for drawing from them, if possible, a statement which, in its substance and even

* Heb. iv. 12.

† Daniel vii. 14.

in its form, must at that critical moment be made. We listen to the question with amazement ; we pause, and hold the breath to hear the answer. And when St. Peter gives it, he seems to be speaking, not for himself only, but in a larger way and for many others ; and, since his reply is given under direct inspiration, it comes with the force of a voice from heaven, and bears a vital relation to the religion which he is to preach. Here, surely, if anywhere, we are in deep places ; and we ought to study, with unusual care, what passed between the speakers, in order to learn its bearing on all men in all time.

And here let me suggest, that, if proof of the inspiration of the Gospels were needed, it might be drawn from episodes like this. The spirit of prophecy looks through ; the words are marvellous words. For how could it be, that persons speaking together so long ago, should utter what meets exactly the case of an age so far off as ours, unless their words had been dictated by the Holy Ghost ? By a correspondence more than accidental, this dialogue constitutes a masterly dissection of the vain philosophies and feeble anatomies of religion which cumber the earth to-day ; and if the Lord in His question, and Simon Peter in his answer, had intended to uncover and reprove the follies of this nineteenth century, the work could not have been more exquisitely done.

“Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am ?” The question is put to the Twelve. It is an invitation to some definite statement as to the Personality of the

speaker. It implies uncertainty on that point. Many opinions indeed were afloat concerning Christ. Men asked : Who is He ? or what ? Observe, it is a personal question, in the plain, popular sense of that word. Here is what seems to be a son of man ; one of us ; of the ordinary stature and outline ; about whose history and family many pretend to information. But *who* is this ? Some said, that he was John the Baptist, others that he was Elias, or one of the prophets. In the brains of many, at that time, were ideas of a metempsychosis ; while some had notions even less clear than that. Even so, to-day, we hear men talk of Christ as an influence, a spiritual power, a moral force, an inspiration, an ideal, or anything, in short, except a Person with a pedigree, and personal powers and qualities, and a local habitation and a Name. “ But whom say ye that I am ? ” The question is pressed, and an answer must be given, of some sort. What is the answer to be ? Shall it be clear or cloudy ? Shall it be scientific or popular ? Shall it come in the doctrinal and dogmatic form, or in the philosophic and ideal form ? When given, whom will it satisfy ; the meek and lowly of heart, the men convicted of sin, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, those of whose souls it is the perpetual loving cry, “ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth ” ? or the wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world, the men who will believe nothing that they do not understand, who insist that the starting point of all knowledge is within the man

himself, and make the human reason the final judge and test of truth ? The Lord awaits the reply ; and the apostles, one by one, await it ; nay, the world, disquieted and troubled, awaits it. For great things depend on this ; men are come to a crisis, amid their discussions and debates. They want, very badly, one thing, a religion worthy of the name. And this answer is to settle one point ; whether a religion is coming at last ; whether the religion to be called “ the Christian,” is to have a Creed, and a Faith, plain and intelligible, or whether it is to address with mere abstractions and a misty philosophical jargon, the men who are stretching hands for help amidst the innumerable cares of life, and the perplexities of this confusing world.

The apostles are silent. Silent might they have stood, hour after hour, had not sudden light flashed, from without, into the mind of one of their number. “ And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” What is this reply ?

Can any doubt that this is doctrine ? Can any reasonably deny that this is dogma ? Is it possible for me, for you, for any man in any age to declare who and what another is, without using exact terms ? Is it possible to say who and what the Son of Man is, without terms and language of that description ? To avoid their use, but one course is possible ; to decline attempting to tell. Saint Peter might have done that. He might have framed his answer thus : “ Thou art an ideal : thou art

an impersonal power ; thou art, we know not what. Thou art destined to act on the human race in after ages as a spiritual influence, an incorporeal agent, a moral and spiritual motive, of which no precise description can be given, of which an exact terminology would destroy the import and the force. We must not attempt to pronounce who and what Thou art ; we dare not speak of Thee in terms which thought in its progress will outgrow ; in our conception of Thee, O Divine Unspeakable, we should be under no dogmatic restraint ; in our description of Thee to others we may use no precise dogmatic language." Why did not Saint Peter speak ramblingly in that style ? Why do we not hear from him some of that unintelligible verbiage about an Ideal Man to be realized by dint of some prolonged yearnings of Humanity which many, to-day, listen to with delight, though, to save their lives, they could not tell what it means ? There was a reason why he used no such idle speech. On him had burst at that moment, a light from heaven. A revelation had come from the Father Eternal. When men try to speak divine things out of their own wits, their talk is thick ; when God speaks it is clear. Such light, such revelation, as we need, are not communicated in the jargon of the philosophers ; the terms are exact as the Thought of God, terse as the Words of God. Dogma is doctrine put forth authoritatively under a rigid definition ; and when Peter made answer, he spake dogma, if ever it was spoken since this world began ; he

spake forth, not Indian, nor Greek, nor Latin, nor German, Scotch, or French metaphysics, but dogma, in the speech of the Catholic Church which was coming with all her glories into the world. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The Catholic Fathers from the beginning admit that this was the confession of the true Godhead of the Lord : it is this which Christ, with persistence and evident design, has drawn from Peter, in definite terms, for a purpose of his own.

There are some to whom the very name of dogma is odious. Have they ever asked themselves whether, in this respect, their mind is as the mind of Jesus Christ ? We may judge of His thoughts on this subject by what He uttered. He seems to have spoken forth with the greatest joy. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona !" There is no chill silence ; no half censure ; no suggestion that scientific theological accuracy displeases Him. On the contrary here is an outburst of Divine satisfaction. "Blessed art thou ! Thou hast formulated my Creed. Thou hast found just words, wherein to translate into human language a superhuman truth. My object, so far, is accomplished. Simon the son of Jonas hath spoken for the eleven, and not for them only, but for all that are to come hereafter ; and this shall be the pattern and mould of Gospel teaching unto the end of the world."

But this is not all ; things of vast importance are to follow. How happened it that Simon Peter did so justly express himself ? Was this great word of his evolved

out of his own consciousness ? Was this root-creed one which he had hammered and shaped on his own anvil ? Was this the result of long study of the Master, of putting one thing and another together, and thinking out a suitable formula ? Did it come of pondering words that had been uttered, revolving signs, brooding over a thousand little matters ? Did it come of yearnings after a sentimental ideal ? Did it come of making experiments to find out who and what Christ was, and how best to state the result ? I say, are the truths of religion the outcome of man's thought, the discovery of a *posteriori* investigation ? Are the articles of the Christian faith the conquest of the critical faculty, the trophy of the intellectual athlete ? Are they the eructation of the maudlin fancy, striving to bring something out of an undigested learning or a morbid discontent ? Listen yet once more : " Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." That tells the story ; that gives to man, forevermore, a Religion wherein and whereby to live.

For Christ's statement is exact. " Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." No scholar needs to be told, that Flesh and Blood means man as distinct from God ; we men, we mortals, we ourselves, we are Flesh and Blood. And the Lord puts away the idea that this knowledge of Him, this statement concerning Him, came from the human side. Not from Peter himself ; not

from any companion ; not from reason, or brain work, or questioned consciousness, or active intellect, came that sublime confession, that strictly theological definition. It was revealed, not evolved ; it was composed in heaven, not on earth. It was taught to Peter, not invented by him. It came from "the Father of lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning."* And here begins the history of dogmatic teaching in the Church. I cannot otherwise understand this scene. The Lord asks them to declare who He is. One asserts, in strict theological language, the secret of His Personality, His Eternal Sonship, His Godhead. And Christ commends the speaker and says : "These are not thy words ; they were taught thee ; they are the verbal vehicle of a revealed truth ; both substance and form are divine."

Is there yet more to come ? There is ; what shall complete the circle of these statements ? How shall it be in after years ? Did Peter speak for himself only, or for others also ? Must men, in after years, be still searching for the truth as for an unknown thing, by interrogating "flesh and blood," by labored process of reasoning, by critical inquiry, by long study and reflection, by listening to inner heart-beat ? Or is there to be a better way than that, so that evermore we shall receive our Creed not from humanity, however learned or active, but from the Father in heaven ? Let this point also be cleared, ere

* St. James i. 17.

the conference at Cæsarea Philippi end. "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." For the purpose of my argument it matters not which of the several views of this disputed text is taken: whether the Rock be Peter, or Christ, or Peter's confession, or the Eternal Godhead of the Lord. Under any possible point of view, one vital truth remains. What has been shall be. A Church is to be built; the revelation is to be kept by her; in her it shall be taught from age to age; "and the gates of hell shall not prevail" against this way of helping and enlightening man. Peter did, in effect, recite his Creed, not as a rationalist, but as one instructed of the Father, and declaring the Father's word. And so, unto the end, shall faithful men recite it, still the same, not as rationalists, but as instructed of that Church, which is "the Body of Christ," * the "pillar and ground of the Truth,"† the witness and keeper of the Truth. And since it pleaseth God thus to reveal His Son to us poor men, who have erred and strayed from His way like lost sheep, and thus, if left alone, must ever err and stray, it behoveth us immediately to leave off conferring with flesh and blood,‡ and simply to make an act of faith, and so find peace and joy in believing.

Lovingly would we dwell on each particular of that memorable scene, and ponder the lessons which it teaches.

* Eph. i. 22, 23.

† 1 Tim. iii. 15.

‡ Gal. i. 16.

That truth is one, and can be simply and briefly stated ; that the knowledge we need to our salvation is given us as to children, and is not to be worked out of our own brains ; that there are divine institutions in the world, which still keep, and ever shall keep, the light burning clear. As we listen, we hear the voices of immortals ; to turn away and be met by the speech of intellectual pride and human boasting, is to have passed from the riches of heaven to the rudiments of a dying world.

But this transition must now be made. Leave we, reluctantly, the Lord and His elect Apostles, and let us turn to the world and listen to the strange business which is there afloat. It seems as if Jesus Christ must have been thinking of such days as these, wherein each principle involved in His question and the answer of His disciple are denied. As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west,* so does this dialogue light up the paths of modern error. In our own time, we see an absolute contrast to that scene ; all is turned round ; each point is flatly contradicted ; the old position is exactly reversed. Under the name of Christianity, is presented what overthrows its cardinal principle, in assuming to show unto us a more excellent way, and pretending to be wise above what is written.

Christianity was first dogmatic ; it must be so. It must teach with authority ; it must give a Creed, and men must accept it, to be Christians. “ He that believ-

* St. Matt. xxiv. 27.

eth not shall be damned.”* But how can a man be told what to believe, without the help of exact theological language? Unless I have and employ the right words, how can I teach the doctrine of the Eternal Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Life of the World to Come? Such words must not be obscure; such words are essentially dogmatic. But this age is against dogma. To use the cant phrase, “Men are restive under dogmatic restraint.” They are uneasy under the plain, direct, old-fashioned teaching in which we, who have passed the meridian of our years, were brought up. What is at the bottom of this? What makes it irksome to be told, “This is true, and your soul is in danger if you do not believe it?” What do they mean who say, “We do not wish to hear Christ preached as a doctrine or a dogma”? Why do men say, “Do not give us doctrinal sermons; we cannot endure them.” What is the alternative, between teaching a child the articles of the Christian Faith, and saying, “hold fast this form of sound words;”† or telling it: “think as you like; it makes no difference; we know not what is true”? Interpret the attitude of the modern mind as you will, this at least seems clear, that it is rebuked by the Lord’s searching question and St. Peter’s concise reply.

Again: it is an axiom in the Holy Catholic Church, that religious knowledge comes to man through revelation; that without revelation we can know nothing of the

* St. Mark xvi. 16.

† 2 Tim. i. 13.

other world, the life to come, and things divine. But here again the times are out of joint. A subtle philosophy is at work; it pervades the community like an atmosphere; it infests, with germs of rationalism, every department of intellectual activity: literature, art, poetry, fiction, education, politics, betray its effects; faith dies out where it establishes its rule. The root-notion of that philosophy is this: that every thing that man can know or needs to know at present is the conquest of his own efforts. The exercise of the reason is the one thing needful, and to this no prize worth having shall be denied. We must begin in absolute ignorance; by experiment, study, and argument we must work up into the light; starting with the fact of self-consciousness, we can demonstrate the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the future world, the moral law. To all this the Church says, No. The Christian Philosophy teaches us, that all truths belong to one of two spheres; we may call them the Rational and the Super-Rational. In the lower order, the reason is sufficient and supreme; in the higher, it is powerless. Not one truth of the higher order above us can the human reason discover, not one can it demonstrate, without God's help. It cannot by searching find out God: * if it hear that He is, it cannot find out who, or what, or where. Out of that sphere truth must be brought to it: to search, unaided by revelation, is to toil all night, taking nothing.† The Christ-

* Job xi. 7.

† St. Luke v. 5.

ian and Pagan philosophies are necessarily in everlasting antagonism. The latter asserts the practical omnipotence of man's reason, the sufficiency of his private judgment ; it bids him search, explore, and rest in his discoveries. The former tells him that he can never know anything beyond this present life unless God show it to him, and that in those things which God does show him, he is not at liberty to criticise, question, or choose, but must listen and accept, and bless God, and give thanks, and hold fast the truth, with the prayer, if need be, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."* Do you ask which of these systems is right ? Go to the Saviour of the world, and have your answer from Him, through His faithful and loving apostle : "Flesh and blood shall not reveal these things to thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The knowledge of the mysteries shall come, not of man or by man, not of brain work, not of criticism. It drop-peth like the rain from heaven ; it comes silently down from above ; and if thou wilt not have it that way, thou canst not know it at all.

Once more : observe how the Church idea has died out of men's minds. Every one is turned to his own way ; and should you speak to the average man of the period about the claim of the Church on him through her creed, her sacraments and her worship, he hardens his heart. And what wonder, considering the confusions and divisions of Christendom ? It is a world-wide

scandal, the refusal of Christians to give up their private notions and submit to authority. But that authority of the Holy Catholic Church is spurned ; ecclesiastical government and order are even more odious than doctrinal precision ; every one must be free to believe what he likes, to say what he thinks, to worship where and as he chooses. This would be right, if it made no matter who the Son of Man is, if there were no terms adequate to tell us what is true and what is false, if we were to confer with "flesh and blood" in deciding the problems of religion. But the shaft of Christ's living word smites through the armor of boastfulness. Truth is revealed ; it is shown us by the Father ; it is kept by the Church. She is to guard the sacred treasure ; to tell the nations who and what their Redeemer is ; and therefore she has a promise that cannot be broken, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee." To us it may seem hard to believe that the promise has been kept ; yet it must have been kept, else were Christ's word untrue. And this is what men should have weighed, ere they tried the vain experiment of having a religion without a church, and breaking away from the Catholic and Apostolic system, and coming down flatly to this, that every man is practically a church and a creed in himself.

I have been invited to this place, to speak to young men destined for the ministry. It may be expected that each one who has the high privilege of addressing them will speak, out of his heart and conscience, what things

he deems it best to say. I have tried to do this. Others may have a different doctrine, and another parable ; but be those what they may, none can be more earnestly pressed upon you than mine, or with a stronger conviction that this is what the Church, whose orders you seek, is saying to us all, and what we need most at this present day. How beautiful is this place ! How lovely are these scenes in which your student life has been spent ! And yet, looking outside these favored and sacred precincts, and listening to the voices about us which best interpret the *genius loci*, one feels like those who pass through charming landscapes or sail on broad rivers, beholding on every hand the moldering relics of a mighty past. This region is strewn with ruins, the silent witnesses to what once was but is no more ; they remind us of a race of men of other days who had intense convictions and a living faith, profound reverence for the supernatural world, and an indomitable moral character. The influences then dominant have yielded to another spirit ; we note in their places the traces of intellectual, moral, and spiritual decline ; skepticism, which is intellectual disease, atheism, which is intellectual death ; an eclipse of faith, a moral paralysis, self-satisfied individualism, and, worse than all, an impression that to be thus blind, diseased, halt, and feeble, is to be healthy, strong and well. You are to go forth into the world, and to do your work there : do you perceive and know what work is needed, what shall bring in the best reward ? What do you seek ?

What dreams are in your hearts? What music would you beat out, in the face of the gathering storms of the latter day? Are you thinking of self, or of God? Are you trusting in "flesh and blood," or listening to the voice of the Father Eternal? When you muse on the Body of Christ, does it present itself to your thoughts as a congregational system, easy and free, wherein every man may have a doctrine, or psalm, and what he likes? * Or do you acknowledge and revere in her that visible Kingdom, which has the perpetual promise of the Lord, and still makes her voice heard among the nations, and still hath authority over mind and conscience in controversies of the Faith? † What manner of men are you to be? What mark are you to make in the community? Will you go to the popular side, where they darken counsel with words without knowledge, ‡ deride theology, and try to feed the flock from the grist-mill of a cold criticism, and the barren fields of human investigation? Will you succumb to those who, pretending that the Church is dead, and the Nicene Creed a worn out formula, take refuge from the paralysis of despair, in visions of some unintelligible future, some evolution of a new and improved religion, some eccentric, comet-like "Christ that is to be?" Or do you wave off such tempters, and take the unpopular side, and confess yourselves the champions of a dogmatic faith, an "*Ecclesia Docens*," and a strict law for thought and deed and word? These are grave questions

* I Cor. xiv. 26.

† Art. xxth of the 39.

‡ Job xxxviii. 2.

for young men in your position. May God the Holy Ghost direct you to the right answer. And may your decision result in giving us, in you, "able ministers" of "the everlasting Gospel," who may really help and bless your age, your country, your own people, and the Church. One thing is clear. If we are to come to what men should be, it is by dint of discipline; by patience and self-denial; by living under law; by keeping the mind humble and the members under control. If this be true with us, one by one, it is true of men in the mass. The religion which a nation needs to make it great, powerful and prosperous, is the very same that moulds each individual of that commonwealth, apart and alone. No religion can so help us, either individually or generally, unless it be strong in speech and action; it must be a law to mind and members; it must not leave men free to go their own way; it must repress license and impose just restraint; when a man would run wild, it must be able to put the hook in his nose and the bridle in his lips, and turn him back by the way that he came. Look about you. Find out that religion. Learn its holy art; obtain the commission to wield its powers; be true to God, conscience, and the Church; and then the age shall be the better for your brief stay in the world, and though men misunderstand you now, they shall honor and bless you after you are gone hence.

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